

The Weight Of Glory- C.S. Lewis

“If you asked twenty good men today what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you had asked almost any of the great Christians of old, he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive... The negative idea of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point.”

“The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves, to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire...Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak.”

“The proper rewards are not simply tacked on to the activity for which they are given, but are the activity itself in consummation.”

“The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor’s glory should be laid on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and the most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship...”

“There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat... This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously—no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption. And our charity must be a real and costly love, with deep feeling for the sins in spite of which we love the sinner—no mere tolerance, or indulgence which parodies love as flippancy parodies merriment.”

“If men had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure, the search would never have begun. We are mistaken when we compare war with ‘normal life.’ Life has never been normal.”

“The insects have chosen a different line: they have sought first the material welfare and security of the hive, and presumably they have their reward. Men are different. They propound mathematical theorems in beleaguered cities, conduct metaphysical arguments in condemned cells, make jokes on scaffolds, discuss the last new poem while advancing to the walls of Quebec, and comb their hair at Thermopylae. This is not panache; it is our nature.”

“In fact, I found that the nearer you got to the front line the less everyone spoke and thought of the allied cause and the progress of the campaign; and I am pleased to find that Tolstoy, in the greatest war book ever written, records the same thing.”

“The rescue of drowning men is, then, a duty worth dying for, but not worth living for. It seems to me that all political duties (among which I include military duties) are of this kind. A man may have to die for our country, but no man must, in any exclusive sense, live for his country. He who surrenders himself without reservation to the temporal claims of a nation, or a party, or a class is rendering to Caesar that which, of all things, most emphatically belongs to God: himself.”

“As the author of *Theologia Germanica* says, we may come to love knowledge—our knowledge—more than the thing known: to delight not in the exercise of our talents but in the fact that they are ours, or even in the reputation they bring us. Every success in the scholar’s life increases this danger. If it becomes irresistible, he must give up his scholarly work. The time for plucking out the right eye has arrived.”

“The only people who achieve much are those who want knowledge so badly that they seek it while the conditions are still unfavorable. Favorable conditions never come.”

“Happy work is best done by the man who takes his long-term plans somewhat lightly and works from moment to moment ‘as to the Lord’. It is only our *daily* bread that we are encouraged to ask for. The present is the only time in which any duty can be done or any grace received.”

“Thus in a geometrical proof each step is seen by intuition, and to fail to see it is to be not a bad geometrician but an idiot.”

“Hence, too, human beings must be trained in obedience to the moral intuitions almost before they have them, and years before they are rational enough to discuss them, or they will be corrupted before the time for discussion arrives.”

“The doctrine that war is always a greater evils seems to imply a materialist ethic, a belief that death and pain are the greatest evils. But I do not think they are. I think the suppression of a higher religion by a lower, or even a higher secular culture by a lower, a much greater evil.”

“It consists in assuming that the great permanent miseries in human life must be curable if only we can find the right cure; and it then proceeds by elimination and concludes that whatever is left, however unlikely to prove a cure, must nevertheless do so. Hence the fanaticism of Marxists, Freudians, Eugenics, Spiritualists, Federal Unionists, Vegetarians, and all the rest. But I have received no assurance that anything we can do will eradicate suffering. I think the best results are obtained by people who work quietly away at limited objectives, such as the abolition of the slave trade, or prison reform, or factor acts, or tuberculosis, not by those who think they can achieve universal justice, or health , or peace.”

“I know there are people who will not find this sort of thing difficult to believe, just as there are people ready to maintain that the true meaning of Plato or Shakespeare, oddly concealed from their contemporaries and immediate successors, has preserved its virginity for the daring embraces of one or two modern professors.”

“A man does not ‘become as a little child’ by aping childhood.”

“The critique of every experience from below, the voluntary ignoring of meaning and concentration on fact, will always have the same plausibility.”

“For I take it there are two things the imagination loves to do. It loves to embrace its object completely, to take it in at a single glance, and see it as something harmonious, symmetrical, and self-explanatory. That is the classical imagination; the Parthenon was built for it. It also loves to lose itself in a labyrinth, to surrender to the inextricable. That is the romantic imagination... But Christian Theology does not cater very well for either.”

“In a certain sense we spoil a mythology for imaginative purposes by believing in it. Fairies are popular in England because we don't think they exist; they are no fun at all in Arran or Connemara.”

“I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

“Obviously bad men, obviously threatening or bribing, will almost certainly not appear. Over a drink or a cup of coffee, disguised as a triviality and sandwiched between two jokes, from the lips of a man or woman, whom you have recently been getting to know rather better and whom you hope to know better still—just at the moment when you most anxious not to appear crude, or naïf or prig—the hint will come. It will be the hint of something which is not quite in accordance with the technical rules of fair play; something which the public, the ignorant, romantic public, would never understand; something which even the outsiders in your own profession are apt to make a fuss about, but something, says your new friends, which ‘we’—and at the word ‘we’ you try not to blush for mere pleasure—something ‘we always do’.”

“When I first went to Oxford the typical undergraduate society consisted of a dozen men, who knew one another intimately, hearing a paper by one of their own number in a small sitting-room and hammering out their problem till one or two in the morning. Before the war the typical undergraduate society had come to be a mixed audience of one or two hundred students assembled in a public hall to hear a lecture from some visiting celebrity... A modern undergraduate... lives in a crowd: caucus has replaced friendship.... There is a crowd of busybodies, self-appointed masters of ceremonies, whose life is devoted to destroying solitude where solitude still exists.”

“There is, in fact, a fatal tendency in all human activities for the means to encroach upon the very ends which they were intended to serve.”

“That is why the modern notion that children should call their parents by their Christian names is so perverse. For this is an effect to ignore the difference kind which makes for real organic unity. They are trying to inoculate the child with the preposterous view that one's mother is simply a fellow citizen like anyone else, to make it ignorant of what all men know and insensible to what all men feel. They are trying to drag the featureless repetitions of the collective into the fuller and more concrete world of the family.”

“A convict has a number instead of a name. But a man in his own house may also lose his name, because he is called simply ‘Father’. That is membership in a body. The loss of the name in both cases reminds us that there are two opposite ways of departing from isolation.”

“That is why the worldlings are so monotonously alike compared with the almost fantastic variety of the saints.”

“I do not believe that God created an egalitarian world. I believe the authority of parent over child, husband over wife, learned over simple to have been as much a part of the original plan as the authority of man over beast. I believe that if we had not fallen, Filmer would be right, and patriarchal monarchy would be the sole lawful government... the only remedy has been to take away the powers and substitute a legal fiction of equality [bc we are fallen]”

“Now it seems to me that we often make a mistake both about God’s forgiveness of our sins and about the forgiveness we are told to offer to other people’s sins... I find that when I am asking God to forgive me I am often in reality (unless I watch myself very carefully) asking Him to do something quite different. I am asking Him not to forgive me but to excuse me.”