

*Presentation by Vince Lombardi June 22, 1970.*

Gentlemen:

I have a number of ways I possibly could approach this subject, and now since I am a resident of Washington I thought perhaps an approach through Jeremiah and the temper of the times, or perhaps to speak of peace when there is no peace, or perhaps approach it through another area such as the conflicts of science with religion, the God and substance of the new ecumenicism, the race between population and starvation at the end of which lay zeal and colonialism, racism, integration, pollution, segregation there are so many different ways and I thought just like trampling grapes in a local vineyard I better stay with the subject I know best and that is football.

I want to talk a little bit about attaining a goal, a success what I think it is. I want to say first that I think you've got to pay a price for anything that's worthwhile and success is paying the price. You've got to pay a price to win, you've got to pay a price to stay on top, and you've got to pay a price to get there. Success is not a sometime thing it is an all the time thing. In other words, you don't do what is right once in a while but all of the time. Success is a habit, just like winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing. So it has been the American zeal, gentlemen, to be first in everything that we do and to win and to win and to win.

Today we have a new ideology that is to be homogeneous, no letter grades, no classification. The only line that some of our people seem to want today is a line between passing and failing. There is no hunt for excellence in other words. You and I both know that this is the easy way. The prevailing idea today is to take the easy way and that effort and work are unnecessary.

You know being a part of a football team is no different than being a part of any other organization being a part of an army, being a part of a political party the objective is to win the objective is to

beat the other guy.

Some may think this is a little bit hard and a little bit cruel. I don't think so. I do think it is a reality of life. I do think that men are competitive, and the more competitive the business the more competitive the men. They know the rules when they get into the game, they know the objective when they get into the game and the objective is to win: fairly, squarely, decently, win by the rules, but still win.

In truth, gentlemen, I've never really known a successful man who deep in his heart did not appreciate the discipline that it takes to win. There is something in great men, that really yearns for, that needs a discipline, really yearns for and needs a head to head combat. I don't say these things because I believe in the brute nature of man or the violent nature of man or that man must be brutalized in order to be combative. I believe that man's greatest hour, in fact his greatest fulfillment, his finest fulfillment, is that moment when he has worked his heart out and for a good cause and lies exhausted but victorious on the field of battle wherever that field of battle may be in your business, in my business or wherever.

Success in life is a matter not so much of talent and not so much of opportunity but rather of concentration and perseverance. The man who succeeds above his fellowman is the man who early in life clearly decides his objective and towards that objective he directs all his powers. All of you are experts in business in your own particular business, and although football is a business it is not the kind of business that qualifies me to shed extraordinary light upon your particular problems and challenges.

I do know, however, that football can be related to your own expertise and that is what I will try to do, to talk about the qualities that I think are necessary for success and the competitiveness and dedication that is needed in business, in your community, in fact in all of life in order to succeed.

What it is, gentlemen, for better or for worse I have picked up a

reputation for being tough or for being hard and I admit I have some mixed emotions about that reputation, particularly when one of my former players when asked, "What is it like to work with Vince Lombardi?" and his answer was "Well, I'll tell you in a nutshell. When Lombardi turns to us in the locker room and tells us to sit down, I don't even look for a chair." And another one was asked "How does Vince Lombardi treat you?" He said, "He treats us all the same like dogs."

I would say there are occasions when being tough immediately is the easiest way and the kindest way really in the long run. We have to be hard sometimes to get the most of people. We have to be tough to get the most out of ourselves, and what can sometimes appear to be cruel at a particular moment can eventually turn out to be a blessing in the long run for the man himself and for the entire organization, and I can say in my business we have so many examples of that.

For example, we have new boys who come in "rookies" as we call them and the sooner we can relate to them that this is not their business the better off they are in the long run because now they can direct all of their power to some other field. If football is not their business. And the same thing with others the veterans it is particularly tough with a veteran who has given nine or ten or eleven years of his life, and he's played some real good football for you personally and for the team and the day must come when you have to tell him, if he doesn't realize it himself, that he no longer can do the job. That's tough! But in the long run and it seems cruel but in the long run it is the kindest thing that can happen to either one of these particular people.

I saw an ad in the paper recently, and I give you my word that it's true by the way, which will lead me to another point. It was an advertisement that read "For sale, a complete set of encyclopedia, never used. Wife knows everything." Really no one knows everything, particularly about people. I'm not an expert in dealing

with people but I think that we should all remember that none of us really is in fact, I don't know of anything that really qualifies me as an absolute authority on success or failure. I do know that each of us must be prepared to adhere to his own particular principles. If he is certain in his own conscience that he is doing the right thing, if he is getting the job done to his satisfaction, and to the approbation of the various publics that he serves, he is doing what he must do. He must also develop a thick skin to criticism and let the caustic comments he receives from some quarters pass over his head. It is sometimes a hard thing to do, by the way to go out and even laugh at things that offend sensibilities or offend families.

Groucho Marx, whom I have a great admiration for his quick wit is the one man who always had this ability, to let criticism fall off his back. Perhaps you remember the magazine "*Confidential*." I believe it is now out of business but the magazine printed a rather tepid story about Groucho Marx accusing him of liking girls. By the way, a fact he never denied in fact he used to say that girls continued running through his mind because they didn't dare stand still. Well, he wasn't worried about that particular article and said nothing. However, about a month or so later the same magazine implied that his TV show was fixed or crooked and Groucho was incensed. However, he replied in what I think is a characteristic way and a great lesson here too. He turned to his typewriter and said, "Gentlemen, if you continue to publish slanderous articles about me I shall feel compelled to cancel my subscription."

I believe too in what Robert Browning said, "That the reach should always exceed the grasp." I've heard two responses given to that particular quotation about a man who was always reaching for the moon. The first that even if you don't always reach the moon you will perhaps grab a star or two, and the other answer is that the man who keeps reaching for the moon will sooner or later strain himself. I tend to believe in catching stars. And I don't think you can ever look back on a year of success and say we can coast during the

year ahead.

We can't coast because there is always going to be someone else moving into a higher gear and reaching for the moon and as a result grasping a star and passing us. Competition is a force to be reckoned with in football as well as in business. In football that competition comes primarily from the inside I should say from the outside while in business competition is from both within and without.

I've been in football all my life, gentlemen, and I don't know whether I'm particularly qualified to be part of anything else except football, except that I consider it a great game, a game of many assets by the way, and I think a symbol of what this country's best attributes are: courage and stamina and a coordinated efficiency or teamwork. And I think it is a Spartan game in that it requires Spartan qualities to play it with, be a part of it, the Spartan qualities of sacrifice and self denial rather than the latest Spartan quality of leaving the weak to die.

I won't say that every football player makes a sacrifice, a real sacrifice, or that every football player will deny himself there are too many examples of those who do not but as a group, as a whole, it does require sacrifice and it does require self denial. It's a game of violent contact and yet because of that violent contact it demands a personal discipline which is found seldom any other place in this modern world. And, gentlemen, these are the same qualities that are necessary for success: courage and stamina and a coordinated efficiency or teamwork, sacrifice and self denial and personal discipline.

And there are other lessons too. For example, every season it requires exhaustive hard work in order to get ready. Just as you, in order to get ready for your particular season, must retrain yourself. Or, if you're starting out new, it requires exhaustive hard work to learn your business. It's a game in which hundreds of thousands of Americans take part that is completely uninhibited by either racial or

social barriers. It's a game in which the only true satisfaction a man receives is that satisfaction which he gets from being a part of the successful whole regardless of what his own particular success is. Just as you. Regardless of what you do as an individual, in your company, you can never be truly satisfied unless your company is also successful.

It is a game of quick decisions and strategy. It's a game which requires proper psychological and emotional attitudes to win. Just as you need the proper psychological and emotional attitudes in order to sell. More important, each man must contribute to the spirit and this spirit is really the cohesive force that binds eleven hardened and talented men into a cohesive force. Just as each of you must contribute to the spirit of your company, to the spirit of your associates, etc. And each Sunday after the battle your team savors its victory. The other lives in the bitterness of defeat. Any hurts are a small price to pay for having won. And to the loser there is no reason which is adequate enough. To the winner there is 100% elation, 100% fun, 100% laughter, and yet the only thing left to the loser is resolution and determination.

Most important of all, to be successful in life demands that each man make a personal commitment to excellence and to victory even though we know deep down that the ultimate victory can never be completely won.

Yet that victory must be pursued and it must be wooed with every fiber of our body, with every bit of our might and all our effort. Each week there is a new encounter, each day there is a new challenge. Yet all of the display, and all of the color, and all of the glamour, and all of the excitement, and all of the rings, and all of the rewards, and all of the money, these things are only limited in the memory.

But the spirit, the will to win, the will to excel, these are the things that will endure and really these are the qualities, larger and more important than any of the events they occasion. Just as the

value of all of our daily efforts are greater, are more enduring really if they create in each one of us a person who grows, a person who understands, one who really lives, one who prevails for a larger and more meaningful victory not only now but in time and hope fully in eternity.

Indeed, I would say that the quality of each man's life is the full measure of that man's personal commitment to excellence and to victory whether it be in football, whether it be in business, whether it be in politics or government or what have you. And likewise too, I think it teaches that work and sacrifice and perseverance and competitive drive and the selflessness, a respect for authority is the price that each and every one of us must pay to achieve any goal that's worthwhile.

Let me just get away from that for a moment. Right now in a large sense I think we're engaged in a struggle for the hearts and it's a struggle for the souls and minds of all of us. And it's a game in which there are no spectators only players, and it's a struggle which is going to test all of our courage, and all of our stamina, and all of our teamwork. At the same time I want to say too that I think we live in an age of heroes. At no other time in our history have the prizes and the perils at one and the same time been so great. But I think we have to decide whether we want to provide a full life for humanity or destroy ourselves with our own problems.

The test is going to be whether man mistakes the growth of wealth and power with the power of spirit and character. Or like some infant who is playing with matches destroys the very house he may have inherited. You know, we talk right now one of the great topics is American freedom, and I think we confuse it with license. There is a great difference. I think before we can embrace freedom we must first have to embrace those things which underline freedom, and they are duty, respect for authority, and a development of mental discipline.

I'm sure you're shocked like everybody else with what seems to

be a complete breakdown of law and order on a moral code. It is almost beyond belief. I'd like to read you something. I won't tell you where this came from until I am through. It says,

*"Corrupt the young people. Get them interested in sex, make them superficial and destroy their ruggedness. Get peoples' minds off their government by focusing their attention on sex, plays, and immoral movies. Divide the people into hostile groups, destroy the peoples' faith in their natural leaders by holding the latter up to contempt and ridicule, preach true democracy but seize power as fast and as ruthlessly as possible, encourage them in extravagance, produce fear of inflation with rising prices and general discontent. Incite unnecessary strikes in vital industries, encourage civil disorders, and force a lenient and soft attitude on the part of government towards disorders. Cause a breakdown of the overall virtues of honesty, sobriety, self respect, faith in the pledged word and ruggedness."*

That's not something I extracted from the Washington Post or from the New York Times last week. This was printed in 1919 at Dusseldorf, Germany and is the *Communist Rules of Revolution* it was 50 years ago. It is of wide spread concern. I want to say that right now!

By the way, I might add that on July fourth, in Washington I'm a member of a committee there which is called "Honor America Day." The chairman of that committee is Bob Hope, the Honorary Chairman is former President Johnson Mr. Truman and Mrs. Eisenhower, plus many, many others from all walks of life and from every group I might add. This is not a demonstration against anything, this is a demonstration for something. It's a demonstration for America. And at 11 o'clock, hopefully, and I hope



you've heard about it in Dayton at 11 o'clock on July fourth, hopefully every city in this country at 11 o'clock Washington time will take part in what we consider an important great demonstration it will be a prayer meeting. Again, let me say this is not pro administration, not pro Nixon, not pro anything, except one thing America. We'd like to show the world and maybe a lot of our people that we are Americans and we are proud of what we have here.

I must say, too, that there is a widespread concern right now over the state of our nation and that concern centers about our youth and their relationship to the future of this country, and that concern is legitimate because what seems to be a complete disregard for law and authority, the meaning of law and authority, and the indispensability of law and authority for their own enjoyment of life, really, and they join together to seek a new light and that light seems to be to break the law with impunity. If you don't like the rule, break it.

It was Alexander Hamilton, I believe, who said that it is a relatively simple matter to break the law when you have a hope of impunity and the strongest deterrent to breaking the law was the fear of punishment. It can be summed up merely as a tendency to distrust or discredit anything of traditional value and the idea, the prevailing idea again, all things come easy. We are not ready to appreciate that nothing in life comes easy. So I think we need a rebirth, gentlemen, of courage and stamina and coordinated efficiency; we need a rebirth of perseverance and determination, we need a rebirth of discipline, we need a control, we need a restraint. I'm talking about a repression; there is a great deal of difference between the right to dissent and the right to destroy. One is articulation and the other is anarchy. So I believe that it becomes our obligation to pursue excellence and to pursue victory and to develop much more a strong spirit of competitive interest and preserve what has always been our American zeal let me repeat that again and that is to be first and to win.

Success, when you speak about success then you speak about leadership, because they are synonymous. Success is to be placed in a position of command and the doctrine of command can be summed up in one word "leadership."

Successful people are leaders. And leadership is defined as the ability to direct people, but more so to have those people have their records accepted. Most of you, most everyone in this room, I dare say, have the qualities or possess the qualities to be successful. But, unfortunately, gentlemen, it rests not upon ability, not upon capacity, but upon our willingness to use those qualities. It also must be based upon truth and upon character, because there must be truth in its purposes and will power in its character. Success rests not upon ability but upon commitment, upon loyalty, and upon pride.

The educated man is naturally successful. Not all educated men are successful. Going to college helps. But a man really can receive his inspiration from any place he can receive his inspiration from the *Fulton Fish Market* if he so desires. And if a man studies his past, and if he studies his country, and if he studies his ancestors, and if he studies the lessons of history, he is educated.

None of us is born equal, in spite of everything they say about it we are born only in certain inalienable rights. But we are born rather unequal. However, I want to say that the talented are no more responsible for their birthright than the underprivileged are and the measurement of each man should be what each does and I want to say that it is becoming increasingly difficult to be tolerant of a society who has sympathy only for the misfit, only for the maladjusted, only for the criminal, and only for the loser. I think we should have sympathy for these, certainly. I think we should help them, certainly. But I think it is also time in this country to cheer for, and to stand up for, to slap on the back the doer, the achiever, a man who recognizes a problem and does something about it, the winner.

I think to be successful, gentlemen, you've got to be honest with

yourself. You've got to believe that you're just like everybody else. You must identify yourself with your associates, you must back up your associates even at the risk, sometimes, of displeasing your superiors. You have to believe that your associates, when I say associates I'm talking about the publics, you must believe that your associates want from you a sense of approval and if this feeling prevails, production, discipline, and morale will be high. You've got to believe in teamwork through participation. As a result, contacts have to be rather close and informal. You've got to be sensitive to the emotional needs of others. And in return the attitude toward you would be, should be, will be one of confidence. Sometimes affection, but that's not the most important thing. I think you've got to believe that a successful man does not exist in the abstract but is judged in terms of what he does in a specific situation.

But the most important element in the character make up of a man who is successful is that of mental toughness, and I might say the most difficult one to explain. Because mental toughness is so many things. For example, it is humility. Simplicity is a form of humility and simplicity is the sign of true greatness. Meekness is a sign of humility, and meekness is a sign of true strength. Mental toughness is Spartanism with its qualities of sacrifice and self denial, also the qualities of dedication and fearlessness and love. Not the love that you have for your wife or your wife may have for you. The love I am speaking of is loyalty, which is the greatest of loves. Teamwork, which is a form of love, and the love that one man has for another is respecting the dignity of another man. The love I speak of is not detraction.

You show me a man who speaks ill of another and I'll show you a man who is temporarily successful. Or one who is not charitable. Or one who is not loyal. I'm not advocating that love is the answer to everything, but when I speak about the love which forces everyone to love everyone else. For example, you've got to love the white man because he is white or the black man because he is black or the

poor man because he is poor or your enemy because he is your enemy, but rather a love of one human for another human who just happens to be white or black, rich or poor, enemy or friend, because heart power is the strength of America, and hate power is the weakness of the world.

Mental toughness is also the perfectly disciplined will and the will, gentlemen, is the character in motion. The great hope of society has to be the character in action. The great hope of society has to be the character in action and we are never going to create a good society much less a great one until we once more recognize and respect individual excellence. Because if we would create something we must be something, because character is the direct result of doing. Character is the direct result of mental attitude and you cannot copy someone else's particular character qualifications but must develop your own according to your own particular personality. Let me say this in closing. When all is said and done to be successful a man must exert an effective influence upon his brothers and upon his associates and the degree in which he accomplishes this depends upon the personality of the man. The incandescence of which he is capable. The flame of the fire that burns inside him. The magnetism which draws the hearts of other men to him. No man, no matter how great he may be, can long continue to be successful unless he wins the battles because the battle decides all.

How you do this, I think it is essential to understand that conquests are won primarily in the hearts of men and once you have won their hearts, they'll follow you anywhere. Man will respond to this type of leadership in a most remarkable way. Success is based upon a spiritual quality, a power to inspire others. Sometimes for good, sometimes for evil, sometimes for one's own personal ends, sometimes it can be partially or wholly evil.

When it is evil, fortunately, while it may temporarily succeed, it always keeps within itself the seeds of its own destruction. The

difference between a successful man and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in lack of will because the character rather than education is man's greatest need and man's greatest safeguard because the character is higher than the intellect.

The difference between men is in energy, in the strong will, in a singleness of purpose, and an invincible determination. But the great difference is in sacrifice, in self denial, in love and loyalty, in fearlessness and in humility, in the pursuit of excellence and in the perfectly disciplined will, because this is not only the difference between men, this is the difference between great and little men.