

[FEBRUARY 15, 1902]

WREATH LAYING CEREMONY

IT IS AN HONOR TO BE ABLE TO JOIN GOVERNOR THOMPSON IN PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THAT GREAT AMERICAN AND GREAT ILLINOIAN, ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

VOLUMES HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT LINCOLN. AND HE HIMSELF, OF COURSE, WAS A MASTER OF OUR LANGUAGE.

ANY TRIBUTE WE PAY HIM TODAY CAN NEVER LIVE UP TO THE GREAT STANDARDS OF LANGUAGE HE HIMSELF SET.

SO INSTEAD OF TRYING TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING NEW TO SAY ABOUT HIM, I HAVE CHOSEN TO QUOTE HIM.

WHEN HE WAS LEAVING SPRINGFIELD TO TAKE UP THE DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENCY, IN 1861, HE MADE A FAREWELL ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY.

HE KNEW THE DIFFICULTIES HE FACED. AND SO HE SAID, RECALLING OUR FIRST PRESIDENT:

"WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF THAT DIVINE BEING WHO EVER ATTENDED (PRESIDENT WASHINGTON), I CANNOT SUCCEED. WITH THAT ASSISTANCE I CANNOT FAIL. TRUSTING IN HIM WHO CAN GO WITH AND REMAIN WITH YOU, AND BE EVERYWHERE FOR GOOD, LET US CONFIDENTLY HOPE THAT ALL WILL YET BE WELL."

THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF LINCOLN: TRUST IN GOD, TRUST IN OUR NATION, TRUST IN THE PEOPLE.

AS WE FACE OUR CURRENT CRISES, AT HOME AND AROUND THE WORLD, WE SHOULD KEEP THOSE PRINCIPLES OF LINCOLN IN MIND. AS EVER, IN SPEAKING FOR HIMSELF AND HIS OWN TIME, HE SPOKE FOR ALL OF US AND FOR HISTORY.

SO, AS WE HONOR HIM TODAY, WE DO NOT NEED FANCY WORDS. WE CAN SIMPLY SAY TODAY: THANK YOU, ABE LINCOLN OF ILLINOIS.