

whether I speak of myself," they were no idle words, and they apply today.

I want to say to you, that a testimony of the Gospel is one of the greatest blessings that one can enjoy today. God bless you, my brethren and my sisters. Encourage your sons and your daughters that are in the mission field. Encourage others to come out and assist in this great latter-day work, and blessings will come to you. I pray that God will continue to bless you with every needful blessing, and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

### ELDER JOHN WELLS

#### *Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric*

I am filled with gratitude for the privilege of being here today in this conference assembly. This conference has given me encouragement, and we all need encouragement sometimes. Above all, I am filled with thankfulness to my Heavenly Father for the testimony which I enjoy and the knowledge of the Gospel that has come to me.

I desire to testify that I know this work is the work of the Lord, it is the plan of salvation, and by living its precepts we can return to our Father in heaven. I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, who came in this last dispensation for the purpose of establishing the Gospel, and this is another reason that my heart is filled with thankfulness.

This morning I desire to refer to an incident in the life of the Master which has impressed me very much. On the Tuesday before his crucifixion Christ was in the temple. Here certain Pharisees questioned him on doctrine, hoping to catch him in his words, and make him an offender of the law. Mark tells us that during this day a scribe came to him and perceiving that Jesus answered them well, he asked him: "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus answered him in this manner:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

"And the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

"And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

"And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

"And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

The present business and financial depression has brought with it many problems that were unthought of even a few years ago. Many Latter-day Saints who have been proud of the fact that they have always been givers to the Church through its various organizations are now in poverty themselves, and the outlook for the immediate future

is far from being bright. At this time of the year, when families need fuel, food, clothing, etc., the bishoprics of this Church are faced with a serious problem. They need more funds. The Church is expending large sums for benevolent and charitable purposes, and the tithes of the Church are being heavily drawn on, in response to urgent calls from members of wards who are unemployed. The bishops need more funds, more fast offerings, more donations from the members of the wards, as well as the splendid assistance of the Relief Societies.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, finding similar conditions prevailing in Kirtland, appointed the first Thursday of each month as a day of fasting and prayer. The Saints were notified to come to the meetings and bring with them foodstuffs of all kinds which were distributed to the poor. After that time it became a fixed routine of the Church to hold the fast-day meeting on the first Thursday of each month, for the purpose of bearing testimony and putting in practice the teachings of the Master concerning our fellow men, by donating funds for the poor to be distributed by the bishops. Later, the day was changed to the first Sunday of each month.

There is need in this Church for a revival of the old fast-day habit, that is, the habit of fasting and prayer on the first Sunday of each month. On this day we should all attend our meetings and bring our offerings for the poor, which should be equivalent to the value of two meals for each member of the family. This will provide a steady fund for the Bishops to use for the support of the worthy poor. We have in the Church certain proved methods of gathering and disbursing the fast offerings, without expense, and the plan has worked well since the institution of fast-day.

President Brigham Young requested that not only should fathers and mothers come to fast meeting, but their children also. Attendance at fast meeting will develop in our children the habit of giving, a habit which is slowly drifting away from us. We can show no better appreciation to our Master than by getting back to the habit of giving something every fast-day, in order that the Lord's storehouse may be properly provided.

Every bishop should see that no member of his ward suffers because of the lack of the necessities of life. He should call to his aid the Relief Society of his ward and they, at his request, should investigate cases of want and suffering and recommend to the bishop what, in their judgment, would be the proper course to pursue in each individual case or family.

Those Latter-day Saints who have previously been in the habit of giving and who are now unemployed and nearing poverty, should have the special consideration of the bishops in these trying times. If there is anyone who should have special consideration, it is the faithful tithe-payer and his family who are now without employment and in need of assistance.

Certainly, the meals for an ordinary person are worth 10c each. If only the cost of one meal were saved and the five hundred thousand

members of this Church paid 10c per person on fast day, there would be \$50,000.00 per month available, which is ample to provide adequately for the worthy poor among the Latter-day Saints. Those who are able to pay more should follow the old rule, that is, the equivalent of the cost of two meals per person.

Benevolence is founded on love for our fellow men. It is more far-reaching than charity. Is it not inconsistent for us Latter-day Saints to say that we love God whom we have not seen, and love not our brother whom we have seen? It is one of the outstanding characteristics of our Church to take care of our worthy poor, and our part in this benevolent duty should not be neglected. All help should be given in the spirit of kindness and love for our fellow men.

In many wards of the Church the deacons are sent to the homes of the Saints with an envelope containing a fast offering card. The family places in the envelope the amount they desire to pay for the support of the worthy poor and then bring the envelope to fast meeting. Those who do not attend this meeting are visited by the deacons the same day and given an opportunity to contribute. Fast offerings are also accepted by the bishop at the meeting house on fast-day.

A Latter-day Saint who observes the fast-day in its spirit and meaning will add to his humility, will develop in his soul a deep heartfelt sympathy and love for his fellow men; he will increase his spirituality and his brotherly kindness, and he will be kept in tune with this great latter-day work. If we would win eternal life we cannot afford to neglect our duty to our fellow men.

May we, as brothers and sisters in this Church, broaden our sympathies and during these times of stress be more diligent, attend our fast meetings, get the spirit of the occasion, the spirit of testimony. May we donate more liberally for the poor, so that there will be enough in the Lord's storehouse, or in the possession of the bishops, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the widow and the orphan, so that cries of the distressed shall not ascend unto heaven unanswered.

Let us demonstrate to the Lord by our works that we are keeping the two great commandments, to love him and to love our neighbor. May his blessings attend us, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

### ELDER JOSEPH F. MERRILL

#### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

Brethren and sisters, since I have been occupying the position of Commissioner of Education in the Church, and at these conferences, sitting on the back row of these front seats, I have learned that there are many anxious seats up this way. Particularly did I observe this last April when not until the last session were most of the mission presidents called up, Sunday afternoon. They sat through the preceding sessions, not knowing when they would be called. This morning one member of the Council of Twelve said: "Brother Merrill, you need