

ELDER LEGRAND RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

BRETHREN: I feel honored to have the privilege of meeting with you here tonight. I have enjoyed the proceedings of this conference a very great deal. I feel that the Lord has been near to us, and if we return to our fields of labor and observe the counsel and the advice that has been given, it will prove to be a great uplift to the Church.

I earnestly pray that I might enjoy the spirit of the Lord during the few moments that I stand before you. It has been suggested that I say a few words on the missionary work of the Church. Those of you who have attended the sessions of this conference, will know that a number of the brethren have already spoken on this important subject. I cannot think of anything I would rather talk about. I love the missionary work. I have had the privilege of filling four missions for the Church, and I just would not want to raise a boy and not have him enjoy that opportunity, even though he might have to serve his country.

I wonder if we really appreciate the great importance of the missionary system of the Church. I have often said that to me it is the greatest organization or institution in the world—without it the kingdom could not be built. I was thinking about it this morning, and I wondered what the Savior would say if he were here tonight and talking to this body of Priesthood, the instruments in his hands for carrying on his work in the earth.

We might ask him his opinion as to the importance of the work, something like this: "Master, is it because you thought the missionary work was so very, very important that you started out the first few verses of your introduction to the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants with a message on the missionary work?" I preface what I want to say by reading those few verses:

"Hearken, O ye people of my church,

saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

"For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated." . . .

"And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

"And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them." (D. & C. Sec. 1:1-2, 4-5.)

That is the beginning of the introduction to the Lord's revelations to guide his church and kingdom in this dispensation as he spake these words unto the Prophet Joseph Smith.

And then we might say, "Master, when you bade your apostles farewell, following your resurrection, was the importance of this missionary work indicated in your last command to them, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, . . . and these signs shall follow them that believe, . . . (and then he named the signs) and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.'" (Mark 16:15-18 and Matt. 28:19-20.)

I would like to bear my testimony to you tonight, that my experience has taught me that the Christ has never rescinded that promise. Wherever the missionaries go, bearing his holy Priesthood, bearing witness of the truth, the Lord goes with them. He goes with them and fills their hearts to overflowing.

I have had many a letter from missionaries while president of a mission indicating that. I have an excerpt from a letter from a widow in the mission-field in which she said that five souls

were about to be brought into the Church and the very thought of it filled her heart with such joy that she felt like it would burst, and then she added, "such happiness I have never known in my life."

Is it because the Lord promised that he would be with them unto the end of the world, and we are approaching the end of the world, that a missionary can make a statement like one that I heard in Oregon a few weeks ago by a missionary who had just returned from his mission? He came down with his fist on the pulpit and said, "Brothers and sisters, I would not take a check for a million dollars today, for the experience of my mission."

Is it because the Lord is keeping his promise, "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," that when we meet for hours and hours, six and eight hours at a time, in the mission field with a missionary group bearing their testimonies and reporting their work, that there is often not a dry eye there? Is it because the Savior has made good his promise that he is with them? After all, he creates the feelings of the human breast, and as I have often said, he is the best paymaster in all the world. His servants are better paid, without their salaries, than others who are paid large salaries for preaching.

I heard President Grant say in Europe, when he was president of the European Mission, that notwithstanding the years he had served as an apostle in the Church, the greatest joy he had ever had in his ministry was in the mission-field. And after we had met in a Priesthood meeting at Rotterdam for a whole day, because he brought a hundred missionaries with him out of England, and each one had had an opportunity to speak, and there had not been a dry eye there, he turned to us missionaries and said, "Now, brethren, today we have feasted on the fat things of the spirit of the Lord. Now go out," he said, "and give it away, give it to the people,—the more you give away, the more you will have left." Is it not wonderful? I have been in missionary

meetings where I felt like I was lifted up into another world, and that should I open my eyes I could see the angels of heaven there. That, to me, is an evidence of how the Lord values this work.

When he stood upon the Mount of Olives and told his disciples that the temple should be broken down and not one stone should be left upon another, they enquired of him saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" He told them of the coming of wars and rumors of wars and tempests and earthquakes and so forth, and then he said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. 24:2, 14.)

And how shall it be preached? Paul said that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." And how shall they hear except it be preached unto them, and how shall it be preached, except they be sent. (Rom. 10:14-17.) So, if the Master is to come and claim his kingdom, the Gospel must be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.

Is it because this missionary work is so important in his mind that when He said to one, "Follow me, But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," Jesus, as if he would say to the Priesthood of his Church, that they should not find excuses not to preach the kingdom, said, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." And then "another also said, Lord I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house, and Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:59-62.)

And then he sent the Seventy out. Is it because the work is so important that he said unto them: "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the

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harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2.)

And, brethren, in this dispensation, when men were first converted to the Church they went to the Prophet Joseph to find out through him from the Lord what thing they should do that would be the most pleasing unto the Lord, and almost invariably the answer came back from the Lord through the Prophet of this dispensation, that they should thrust in their sickles and reap because the harvest was white already to be garnered, and then he added, and if it so be that ye shall labor all your days and bring save one soul unto me, how great shall be your reward in the kingdom of my Father.

I have thought of that promise and have reached the conclusion that I would not exchange the friendships that have been mine with those whom I have had the privilege of bringing into this Church, with the help of the Lord, as one of his missionaries, for all the wealth of this world. When the Lord said, "If you bring save one soul unto me how great shall be your joy," I never realized just what that meant until I had a letter from a man from Phoenix while I was president of the Southern States Mission, in which he indicated that his father was one of the first converts out of the State of Mississippi back in 1840, and said, "Since that time my father's own descendants have given 100 years of missionary service to this Church, and there were 15 then in the missionfield, and we had three of them. I told that story here in the Barratt Hall at a Missionary Conference in 1940, just 100 years after that man had been gathered into the fold by the efforts of a missionary, and this good brother happened to be present, and at the close of the meeting he came up and said, "Brother Richards, it is now 160 years." When you get to adding 15 or 20 years, a year, it soon runs into figures.

Think of the young missionary who might have traveled through the swamps of Mississippi in those early days, when many of the missionaries contracted

the malaria fever, and if he only brought, say, this one soul into the Church, he might have felt that his labors had been in vain. But in 100 years time there are 160 years of missionary service from the descendants of that one man, alone, not counting all the converts they had made, and their converts, and their converts, until you would have, literally an empire of people who had joined the Church because this missionary brought this one man into the Church.

Is it because of the importance of this great missionary work that when the Savior asked the twelve Nephite disciples what thing they desired at his hands, all but three expressed the desire that they might live to the allotted age of man, and then come unto him in his kingdom, but three of them hesitated, and he told them that he perceived that their desire was the same as that of his Apostle John, that they might tarry to bring souls unto him, until he should come in his kingdom, and for this desire he commended them.

He indicated that the desire of the nine was good, but the desire of the three was a greater desire, to have in their hearts a desire to bring souls unto him.

Brethren, I feel that every man who bears the priesthood of God should desire to contribute to the missionary work of this Church. I think every father in Israel ought to raise his boys with a desire to be missionaries. When we think of the blessings that we have, the priesthood that we bear, it is worth more than all the wealth and the success of the world. Why should we not want to share with those who know not the truth and make it possible for them to enjoy the glorious blessings that are ours which we enjoy as members of this Church.

I remind you of the story that President Grant used to tell about the good Scandinavian brother who came to Utah. He had not been taught very much about the Gospel, but he loved it. The bishop went to him and taught him the law of tithing, and he paid his tithing; he taught him the fast offering,

and he paid his fast offering; and then he went to get a contribution for the erection of a meeting house, and the brother did not know why that could not be taken out of the tithing, but before the bishop got through with him, he paid his contribution for the meeting house; and then the bishop went to him to get his son to go on a mission, and the brother said, "That is the straw that breaks the camel's back. He is our only child. We just can't let him go." And then the bishop countered, "Brother so-and-so, whom do you love in this world more than any one else outside of your immediate family?" And he thought a minute, then he said, "I guess I love that young missionary who came up to the Land of the Midnight Sun and taught me the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ." And then the bishop countered, "How would you like someone to love your boy just like you love that boy?" And he said, "Bishop, you win again. Take him."

When I went on my first mission, President Anthon H. Lund told us missionaries that the people over there would love us. "Now don't get lifted up in the pride of your hearts," he said, "and think that they love you because you are better than others, they will love you because of your calling, and the Spirit of the Lord that rests upon you." I did not know just what Brother Lund meant by that, but when I went to leave Holland to return home, I shed a lot more tears than I did when I left my loved ones to go to Holland. I went to one home; and a man old enough to be my father, in the government service all of his life, with a long beard, knelt down on the ground and took my hand in his and hugged it and kissed it and bathed it with his tears, and then I knew what Brother Lund meant, and then I went into another home where the woman said, with the tears rolling down her cheeks, "Brother Richards, it was hard to see my daughter leave for Zion a few weeks ago, but it is much harder to see you go." And then I realized what Brother Lund really meant, that they should

love us because of the Spirit that we take with us into the world.

I feel that every father in Israel ought to want to see his boy go on a mission, and if he has not been himself, I think he ought to want to go, or else help with the stake missionary work. I think we all ought to want to have to our credit, when a count is finally taken, that we have done something in the great missionary cause of this Church.

President McKay threw out a challenge to us in the temple at Logan the other day, that each one of us ought to try and bring one soul into the Church during the next year. If every member of this Church would try and do that just think what a harvest there would be, and when you stop to think about it, here in this stake missionary work, we have all of our buildings to offer to our friends, we have a great program. I think now of a man who came into my office a few months ago. He was here from Michigan with his family, and he said, "Bishop, how can I get my family into your Church. I have seen so much and heard so much about your activities for youth, and we do not have any," he said, "and I must have my children enjoying these things."

And so, right here in our midst, if we will just carry the message to our neighbors and our friends, many of them will join the Church.

Since the close of the afternoon meeting, I visited with a man for nearly an hour in my office. He lived in one of our towns here in Utah for three years and no one ever offered him the Gospel or told him anything about it or invited him to come to one of our meetings, and then he moved off down to California and years later he got into a good man's office who gave him a book to read and now he is an Elder in this Church.

I do not know whether this story is true or not, but it is a good story, and I like to tell it, and I heard it when I was young. The story is told of an Englishman who bought a farm up here in Davis County, he was not a

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member of the Church and all around him were Mormons, but, you know, when they met this Englishman neighbor they did not want to impose their religion upon him and so they passed the time of day and talked about current events, and finally one of the neighbors was called on a mission to Great Britain, and while he was there, his English friend decided to go back and visit his relatives in England, and while there he picked up a newspaper one evening and read an announcement of a Mormon Conference to be held and everybody invited and no collection—you know how that goes. "Well," he said, to himself, "after living out there among them for all this time, I do not know a thing about what they believe. I guess I had better go and listen to them." So he went, and to his surprise, the principal speaker that evening was his neighbor from next door, from over in Davis County, and he had to go all the way back to Great Britain to get that neighbor to tell him of the marvelous work and a wonder the Lord had set his hand to do in our day.

I met a Stake Mission President in one of our stakes outside of Utah, and learned that he was a convert to the Church; that he had lived in Salt Lake City for twelve years, but he had never attended one of our meetings, nor did he join the Church until he moved away, and the missionaries contacted him. I said, "Why didn't you join when you were in Salt Lake?" He said, "No one ever invited me."

Brethren, I hope that right here at home we will do some good missionary work. You bishops, don't be too stingy in giving these mission presidents the help they need, where you have non-members living within the confines of your stake. Some of these stakes are going to be comparable to our foreign missions through the missionary work that is being done and the spirit of missionary work that is coming into the Church.

It is a great loss to a man to miss the experience of a mission. It is a great loss to a home to miss having

their boys go on missions. A short time ago one of our mission presidents reported that they had eighteen missionaries come into their mission out of homes where the parents were not active in the Church, but in a short time, in fifteen of those homes the parents had become active, so that the missionary work is not done only with the ones we meet in the missionfield, but in our own homes, in the lives of the missionaries, in the communities in which we reside, the wards and stakes, we help to lift the spirituality by the missionary work that is rendered in these wards and in these stakes.

We are also trying to reach out to what we call the minority groups. I like the spirit that Brother Kimball has with these Lamanites. I believe it is because of the importance of this great missionary work that he loves them like he does. I was in a stake president's home not so long ago, and there was a picture of his missionary boy on the piano, and I said, "Where is he laboring?" And the wife said "Down among the Indians." And I hardly dared ask the next question, I was afraid. Finally, I got up courage and said, "How is he enjoying it?" "Oh, Bishop," she said, "He thinks they are wonderful. He is even talking of going back to live there when he gets released from his mission."

I think that is what the Lord meant when he said, "And, lo, I will be with you alway even until the end of the world." He plants that love in their hearts.

I heard a young girl reporting her mission among the Indians just recently and she just wept when she told of the souls of those women among whom she had labored. We might not have thought that they were worth saving. And so we have the Indians and the Mexicans and the Chinese and the Japanese and other races of people here in our midst, and remember the Lord said, "And this Gospel of the Kingdom should be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations."

And when John saw the angel flying

in the midst of heaven with the everlasting Gospel, it was to be preached to every nation, every kindred, every tongue, and every people. (Rev. 14:6-7.) Does that leave anybody out? If not, that is a part of the great missionary responsibility that we bear to the world.

I bear you my testimony that it is one of the sweetest experiences that can come, and I hope that even our boys who have been in the armed forces will not be robbed of the privilege of going on missions. I think the bishops ought to interview them all, and if they are worthy, give them an opportunity and even if they cannot go, they will feel drawn to the Church because they have been invited.

I would like to say in parting to the bishops, do not just sit in your offices and decide that boys cannot afford to go on missions. I will tell you a story that was told to me. A good brother, a friend of mine, who aims to keep a missionary in the field all the time, decided to go to a poor section of the city and see if the bishop would like to furnish him a missionary, so he said, "Do you have a young man that you think would like to go on a mission and you have not called him because you did not think he would have the money?" The bishop said, "We have

just such a man as that." My friend said, "Well, you talk to him about it." So the bishop went to him and when he told this young man that he wanted him to go on a mission, the young man's face lighted up and he said, "Bishop, I have the money in the savings bank for my mission. I have been waiting two years for you to tell me you would like me to go on a mission." I wonder how many men in Israel there are who have waited on their bishops and the call never came.

God help us to arise to the importance of this great missionary work, I humbly pray, and leave my love and blessings with you all, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

The congregation, and that includes those brethren in Provo and in Logan, in the Assembly Hall, in Barratt Hall, and other places, will now join in singing, "We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet," Brother Spencer Cornwall directing.

The Men's Chorus and the congregation joined in singing: "We Thank Thee, O God, For A Prophet."

PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

MY BRETHREN: It is always a thrill to meet with this great body of Priesthood, and every time I meet with you, I am afflicted with the dread that we are not exercising the power for righteousness that belongs to us. No one can estimate the power and the influence that we might wield, no one can estimate the amount of good we might do if we were united, and no one can estimate the amount of good we are not doing, because we are not united as we should be, united in faith, united in action, believing the same things, supporting our leaders, ward,

stake, Priesthood, and all the rest. What we could do if we would but exercise the powers of the Priesthood which we have.

And I return again to a thought that I have expressed, I think, every time I have been here in the last twenty years, that we cannot trifle with the Priesthood. It is not something that we can take off as we wish, and put on when we get ready. It is something that is with us all the time, until we lose it through transgression, and then we may not put it back on, because we shed a few tears. Brethren, guard, guard your