

Friday, April 5

First Day

should have our minds and hearts and the whole intent of our souls on the things that give us health and happiness and effectiveness here, and which will lead to limitless progress hereafter, and there are clear-cut ways of discerning the difference between right and wrong. I pray that we may find them and live by them, and that our Father's purposes and promises concerning each of us may be realized by the wisdom of our choices and by the acceptance of this personal responsibility of which President McKay has spoken. For beyond our Savior's saving grace no one stands between us and our own salvation—or exaltation. I pray that we may find it, and that we may be part of that glorious homecoming which it is our Father's hope and purpose to bring about for the whole human family.

God bless you and be with you, and with us all in the use of our freedom, and in the acceptance of the challenge and trust which our President has given

unto us this day in meeting and living by this personal responsibility, and making our choices wisely so that all that our Father intends for each of us may be ours in his presence and in his kingdom with our loved ones. In Jesus' name. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

You have just heard Elder Richard L. Evans of the Council of the Twelve. The Choir and Congregation will now sing "High On The Mountain Top," two verses. Following the singing, Elder LeGrand Richards will speak to us.

The Combined Choruses and the congregation joined in singing the hymn, "High On The Mountain Top."

President David O. McKay:

Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve will now address us.

ELDER LEGRAND RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I AM SURE OUR hearts have all been stirred this morning with appreciation for being privileged to be members of this great Church, for our great leader and the power of his leadership, and for these our Brethren, and I rejoice in being with you, in being a part of this great latter-day gospel movement.

The President referred in his talk this morning to the great progress that is being made and has been made in the world scientifically, the comforts that we enjoy, the powers that have been harnessed, and as I think of that—electricity and the sound waves that have brought us all these modern conveniences—I wonder if the world realizes that there are other unseen powers that are operating in the world, the power of darkness seeking to destroy the work of the Lord, and the power of God in the hearts of the honest who find the way of eternal truth.

I would like to predicate the few words that I say this morning on an experience that I had a few weeks ago in attending a stake conference in a neigh-

boring state. One of the fine men of the community, through the efforts of our stake missionaries, had recently joined the Church. He was happy in his membership in the Church. It brought a change in his life, a change in his thoughts, a change in his habits, a change in his desires and interest in his fellow men. He had a neighbor with whom he had been very friendly. They lent each other equipment from their farms, but as soon as this man joined the Church his neighbor turned against him.

The new convert ran for a position on the school board, and his neighbor went out and gathered people from far and near to bring them into the polls to defeat this former friend and neighbor. After the election was over, the new convert went to his neighbor. He said, "What have I done that would change your attitude toward me as it has been changed?" The answer was, "I do not like the Mormons."

If he had been living in the days of the Savior, his answer would have been,

"I do not like the Christians," and I think of the words of the Savior when he said:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also.

But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. (John 15:18-21.)

If we understood the power there is operating in the world to deceive the nations! Reference has been made this morning to Satan. We read in Revelation that when he was cast out of heaven, the cry went up,

... Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. (Rev. 12:12.)

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (*Ibid.*, 12:7-9.)

Just think of that statement for a moment, that he "deceiveth the whole world." I am sure the world does not know how often they listen to his deceptive voice in the things that they do and in the decisions that they make. At this particular point, when we look back over the history of Christianity, we ask ourselves, "How could they have crucified our Lord, the one great example unto all men?" The only answer is because they were deceived by this power of darkness. It is not only those who are wicked who listen to his voice, but also many righteous people who mean to be doing God's service, just like Paul of old, or Saul of Tarsus. You remember how he held the cloaks for those who stoned Stephen to death, not because Stephen had done any harm, but

because this power that "deceiveth the whole world" could not make place for him in this world, and brought about his martyrdom.

Paul, on his way to Damascus, went to obtain a writ to persecute the Saints, and then it was that the voice of the Master said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? . . . it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." (Acts 9:4-5.) You see, Paul had thought he was doing the Lord's service, but after he came to know the power of the truth, he gave his life. We read how often he was scourged and whipped, and finally he was beheaded at Rome under Nero. Take the history of all of the apostles. Why were they put to death? Why did the world hate them? Because they were not of the world, and the world could not fellowship these apostles.

I was in Mexico a few weeks ago, where I saw oil paintings of all of the apostles and how they were put to death. Peter, as you know, was hanged with his head downward. James was beheaded at Jerusalem, and Paul, as I have told you, was beheaded at Rome. John was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil. Through the power of God his life was saved, and all of the apostles were put to death save John. Why? Because this power of the evil one "deceiveth the whole world," according to the word of John.

Those of us who have had considerable missionary experience know how literally that is true. Why were the Saints all looked down upon? When Paul appeared in Rome, as you will remember, the high priests said,

... we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest, for as concerning this sect, we know that it is everywhere spoken against. (Acts 28:22.)

Why was the truth everywhere spoken against? Well, you see, there was a war in heaven. There isn't time to go into detail; I just read to you a few words about that. Satan and a third of the hosts of heaven were cast down upon this earth, and they brought with them the knowledge that they had, and according to Isaiah, Satan has decreed that he would exalt his throne above the throne of God, that he would become like unto the Most High.

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Then Isaiah speaks of him who has deceived the nations and destroyed the world and the inhabitants thereof, and all we need to do is to look at the history of the world, and realize the power that is bringing about such destruction, when, if we would heed the light of truth and inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord, all men might live in harmony and in peace, and the nations of the earth might walk in the light of the Lord their God, which condition, we are told, will ultimately come to pass.

So these great persecutions we find in our own work. As the Church was evil-spoken of in that day, it is evil-spoken of in our day. We have found this as we have labored among the people. If it were not for that power that deceiveth the nations, there would be hundreds of thousands of honest people in this world join this Church because it literally is the Church of Jesus Christ restored again to the earth in this day.

I think of Nicodemus who came to the Savior of the world. He said, ". . . we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." And Jesus told him how he should be born again, and then he said, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." (John 3:2, 11.)

Now we are witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we speak that we do know to the world, and we testify that we have seen, and we know that his truth has been restored to the earth, and the heavens have been opened; and so, as Jesus said, "because ye are not of the world, . . . therefore the world hateth you."

Many of our finest members are those who have had prejudices against this Church until they were brought into contact in a way that we could present the gospel message to them. I had a report from one of my distant relatives back in New England a short time ago, and he had just read one of our books. He said, "I doubt if you have any idea the erroneous conception the people of New England have regarding the Mormon Church. Sometimes I wonder if they believe the things that they tell."

A man in New England to whom I had the privilege of preaching the gos-

pel wrote me a letter after I returned home. He was the treasurer of his own church. He thanked me for bringing him the truth but said, "I am too big a coward to accept it until I can get my friends and my relatives and my neighbors to feeling more friendly toward your people." You see, because we are not of the world, therefore the world hates us.

We were holding a conference in Mississippi when I was the president of the mission there, and a young college man came up at the close of the morning meeting and wanted to know if he could talk in the afternoon meeting, and I assured him he might. He said, "But I am not a member of your Church." "Well," I said, "you cannot say anything that will hurt any of our members," and so we called him up to speak, and this is what he said:

"I was raised here in Mississippi to believe that the Mormons were the most undesirable people in the world, and then I finished my college education and went to Arizona to work. There my lot was cast with the Mormon people, and when I returned here it was cast with the Mormons here. Now I have been attending their meetings. I know what their lives are, and their ideals, and their teachings, and I no longer think of the Mormons as the most undesirable people in the world. I am wondering when I will be good enough to be a member of the Mormon Church."

That is what people find when they know the truth, and if the evil one were not out deceiving the minds of the whole world, as the scriptures say, this work would go on with mighty progress in the world.

I bear you my witness that there is not an honest man nor an honest woman in this world who really loves the Lord who would not join this Church if he knew what it was, and we find testimonies coming to us from all sides.

I remember one minister in Holland. His friends who had joined our Church persuaded him to come and listen to our missionaries, and at the close of the meeting he denounced Joseph Smith as a false prophet, as a deceiver, as everything vile he could think of, and then

he went home and went to bed. He told me this story himself, and he was one of the finest companions I have ever labored with in the Church.

He said, "I did not know what I had done, but I knew that I had grieved God because peace had gone out of my mind. I lay and tossed all night until the wee hours of the morning, and then arose and walked the streets until I thought the Mormon elders would be up, and then I went to their door and asked for a copy of the Book of Mormon." I want to tell you that I never listened to a testimony that impressed me more than to hear that man of God bear witness that he knew that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and the Book of Mormon was true, and the kingdom of God had been established in the earth to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

We have had a good many ministers join the Church just recently—one only last week right here in Salt Lake City—men who are humble enough to realize that the truth must be established in the earth as it was in the days of old to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

In closing, I would like to read a little statement from two of our recent converts. This is a copy from a letter that I received a few days ago from a woman I met in Alabama while touring that mission last November—a dignified, beautiful character. She left her own church, and after so doing, she went back to the minister to ask him to take her name off the records. She said, "May I go in the classroom where I have stood for years, and taught a Sunday School class? I want to thank God for the privilege that has been mine of teaching in that room and ask his blessings upon me as I leave it."

Here are a few words from her letter: "Elder Richards, I was a member of this wonderful Church one year, the 5th of February, and I can truthfully say, 1956 was the happiest year of my life. There is hardly a day that passes that something doesn't happen that strengthens my testimony. I only regret that I did not have an opportunity to receive this gospel about thirty years ago. I will just have to be content with doing what I can the rest of my life."

And then she tells of her activities in the Church.

This is from a woman who wrote in to Salt Lake City for information from the Bureau of Information, and they sent her literature to read. Then after joining the Church she wrote: "I now have a serenity and composure, and inner strength, and an inward joy which I never before possessed." That is the kind of joy Paul had, and others who had been enemies of the Church, until Paul was willing to give his life for his testimony. You will remember when he stood in chains, and Festus said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad," to which Paul replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," to which Paul replied in words like this, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were . . . as I am, except these bonds. (Acts 26:24-25, 28-29.)"

In closing, I want to read to you the statement of Gamaliel. You remember the statement of Gamaliel, how he came to the rescue of the apostles of old and said this to the chief priests of the land:

Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. (*Ibid.*, 5:35, 38-39.)

I bear you my solemn witness that any man or any woman who lifts a voice or a hand to stay the progress of this work is fighting against God, the Eternal Father, and is deceived by the author of evil in the world. God bless you all in the great missionary cause of the Church, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve has just concluded speaking. The Combined Brigham Young University Chorus will now sing,