

Friday, April 4

First Day

own unformed ideals leaping into high resolve. We need more of that, too.

Thomas E. McKay was a stake president. I was a member of his stake for many years. Thomas E. McKay was for children. When help was needed, his weight and his influence were applied with full force and without reservation, and it was no mean force. He made only one stipulation to me when I was working with children. The man operating the program must not let the parents or the Church down. The principles of salvation and the testimonies of leaders must be the guiding factors.

These three elements were part of the living souls of the three men of whom I speak, whom I loved and revered.

Now, may I summarize what I have just said as to what our children might need and which we should be alert to give them:

Teach youth to play fair and square, to play hard and to win modestly, to lose gracefully, but, above all things, protect them from evil men until they are old enough to protect themselves. That is a vital thing.

Fire each child with the desire to reach the heights of happy achievement.

Unless the spark kindles the flame, an inner flame, it will not warm the soul. This is vital, too.

Finally, keep always in mind the ultimate goal, exaltation in the presence of the Father and the Son. Do nothing to cloud this goal in the minds of children, my brethren. Do everything to keep its guiding light brightly shining.

I believe that if these three things, plus others which could be mentioned in handling children, can be applied, somehow our eternities will be sure. In this group here before me is the power to lead our children into righteousness, if we will but apply the principles.

My testimony is that God lives and that Jesus Christ the Lord lives and watches over us and desires us to come into his presence if we will but obey. I say it in his Holy Name. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder S. Dilworth Young of the First Council of the Seventy has just spoken to us. Now we shall hear from Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church.

ELDER ELDRED G. SMITH

Patriarch to the Church

I pray that I shall have an interest in your faith and prayers while I take this precious time. We have heard of the successes of the missionary work and the other activities of the Church. The growth of the Church is glorious in all its activities. The success of man and the Church can be measured, I think, in the answer to the question, "How near to God are you?"

Every one of us came from a pre-earthly existence. We always existed. Before coming to this earth we lived with our heavenly parents. We were their children. Challenging Job, the Lord said:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4, 7.)

And again Abraham said:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born. (Abraham 3:22-23.)

We are all children of our heavenly parents. We lived with them in the celestial kingdom. We walked by sight. We knew what the celestial glory was. As spirits only, we could not partake of the fulness thereof. We knew how our Heavenly Father came to his exaltation. Was it any wonder, then, that we

shouted for joy when it was made known unto us that we could come to earth? We knew this was the step necessary and the opportunity for us to gain that glory which we there knew so well. We were promised that if we were faithful in all things we would have the opportunity to return unto our Father in heaven. We knew we would come here, having forgotten all, and be tried and tested. This was to be an opportunity where we would learn from our own experience. We were to learn good from evil, right from wrong. We would learn obedience.

To prove our obedience, among other things, there was a gospel plan given. This plan made necessary a Savior. Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, came in the Meridian of Time, and through his atoning sacrifice broke the bonds of death and opened the gates of the resurrection.

This Sunday all Christians celebrate the anniversary of this great day. Through him all shall have a glorious resurrection. We were promised the right and opportunity to return to our Father in heaven. Jesus Christ was our Elder Brother in that pre-earthly existence. He was, however, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. It was he who created this earth. Thus, as a God, begotten of the Father in the flesh, he had power over life and death. No power could take his life unless he gave it. He could have lived forever. But no, he chose to do the will of the Father and give his life that all might live. Thus he broke the bonds of death and opened the doors of the resurrection, giving all mankind, all God's children, the opportunity to be resurrected and come unto him.

Through Christ we shall all be resurrected, but not all to the same glory. In Corinthians we read:

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. . . . (I Cor. 15:40-42.)

The highest glory is the celestial, and naturally, the abode of our Father in heaven. To attain this glory there are special requirements. For this purpose is the gospel given to man. How well we, individually, accept and fulfil the laws of the gospel determines how near to God we will come.

How near to God are you? The Lord has said:

Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matt. 11:28.)

Brother Kimball reminded us this morning, and I have often heard him say, "Rest is not relaxation and lounging. It is exaltation."

Christ has given us the gospel as a way of life that will lead us, if we will live it fully, to exaltation. He has not left us to stumble blindly in the dark. It is there for us to follow and obey. Christ said to Nicodemus:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus did not understand, and the Lord added,

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:3, 5.)

How near to God are you? If you have not entered the waters of baptism yet, I suggest that you seek God in prayer and ask for understanding that you also may come nearer to him. Through prayer and wholehearted desire we may come near enough to him to receive extra added strength, to keep his commandments, to overcome evil, to change from bad habits to good habits.

Johnson said "bad men excuse their faults; good men leave them." Have you placed a barrier between you and God through misdeeds, neglect, omissions, or habits displeasing to God which keep you from coming nearer to him? How near to God are you? Repentance is a very difficult task, yet we all have plenty of it to do. Prayer is needed to help us repent. The feeling of guilt ties our tongues so that we cannot speak to him or approach him, yet God is

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always there to help. The door is never completely closed. Adversity is often the tool used to humble us and bring us closer to our Heavenly Father.

How near to God are you? Do you have the strength to repent? Yes, you may even be given added physical strength if you live near enough to God. I recall the experience of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he received the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Before bringing them directly home he secreted them in a grove of trees, and upon returning for them he found them safe, and as he started homeward he was encountered by a man who tried to force them from him. He fought this man off, knocking him down, then in going farther the Prophet met another man whom he likewise knocked down. He continued again, and met a third man with the same result, then ran the rest of approximately three miles to his home. I think the Lord gave that experience to show him that he could receive extra added physical strength, because though he had the plates in his possession which would handicap or hinder him physically, he was still able to overcome the physical powers that were forced upon him.

Yes, how near to God are you? To be exalted with God in the celestial kingdom requires both righteous living and fulfilling the ordinances of the gospel. There are those who live a good life, but do not accept the ordinances of the gospel. On the other hand there are those who think that because they have been baptized, ordained, endowed, and sealed, that is enough. Yet they do not live righteous lives. Both righteous living and fulfilling the ordinances of the gospel are necessary to come unto God. Jesus Christ said to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove in that greatest of all visions:

... they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.

I wonder how many of us who are members of the Church draw near to him with our lips, but our hearts are far from him. Are we near enough to pay a full tithing? Are we near enough to keep the Word of Wisdom? Do we attend our Sacrament meetings? Do we do our ward teaching? Do we partake of the Sacrament and covenant to keep his commandments, and then keep them? Do we go to the temple to be sealed as husband and wife for time and eternity? Do we have peace, love, and harmony in our homes? Or are we like the ten virgins the Lord referred to of whom only fifty percent would measure up to come into his presence?

Patriarchal blessings are given to help us to return unto God, to be exalted in his kingdom. The blessings of the Lord are given to all who will come unto him. Seek his guidance in prayer and faith and humility, that the blessings of the Lord shall be unto you as you draw near to him with your hearts, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, has just spoken to us. The congregation will now join in singing, "Now Let Us Rejoice." They will join with the Combined Choruses from the Brigham Young University, conducted by Don L. Earl, with Roy M. Darley at the organ.

After the singing Elder ElRay L. Christiansen will speak to us.

The congregation and the Combined Choruses of the Brigham Young University joined in singing the hymn, "Now Let Us Rejoice."

President David O. McKay:

Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder George Q. Morris.