

Thursday, April 5

First Day

something which may come to you from an English architect, from somebody who, not connected with your Church, appreciates the vast work which the Church is doing.

President David O. McKay:

Thank you, Sir Thomas. And may you and Your Ladyship have a most

delightful and memorable visit here among the people in Salt Lake City and Utah. If there is anything that we can do to make your visit more delightful, our hearts tell you truly, it will be a pleasure for us to do it.

Our concluding speaker will be Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve.

ELDER HOWARD W. HUNTER

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Not long ago we were traveling through the air so high above the white clouds that they looked like a blanket of snow beneath us. The sky was blue, and the sun was shining, and then we commenced our descent for landing. As we came down through the clouds, a new scene came into view. The earth had been plowed for planting, and the sun was shining on the fields, some plowed in one direction and some in another. It made the earth appear as a great giant checkerboard. We came down and down and then, when within a few hundred feet of the ground, I saw a man laboring in the field, his hands fixed to a plow drawn by a horse. My thoughts turned to that closing verse in the ninth chapter of Luke in which the Master said:

"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62.)

Christ made this statement as he traveled to Jerusalem. Three men had expressed their willingness to follow him and become his disciples. The first of these said to him: "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

"And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (*Ibid.*, 9:57-58.)

Jesus had no definite place of residence. He went from place to place teaching and doing good. It was necessary that the men who were called and set apart for the work should devote their time and attention and forego worldly affairs. The work of the Master set the great example. The second man

was also willing to follow. "But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

"Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." (*Ibid.*, 9:59-60.)

Does this statement sound severe? The Master made it clear that the work of the kingdom was to take precedence over all other things. Then the third man stepped forward and said: "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house." (*Ibid.*, 9:61.)

Not one of the three was willing to follow him without first returning to their worldly affairs. The answer of Jesus is one of the great aphorisms of biblical literature. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (*Ibid.*, 9:62.)

In his teachings the Master used homely figures of speech, those having familiar, everyday character. The words, "his hand to the plough," unfolds a picture before us with which we are all familiar—a strong man with sinewy arms and a firm step, guiding the blade straight and true, his eyes intent upon the plough, looking ahead to the furrow to be cut. Hour after hour he toils, never looking backward except to see that the furrow is straight.

In addition to "ploughing" the Lord often mentioned the words, "sowing" and "reaping." He made mention of "reaping the harvest," and when that comes to our minds we think of a happy time and a time of rejoicing. The Lord said: "Lift up your eyes, and look on the

fields; for they are white already to harvest.

"And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." (John 4:35-36.)

Before there can be a reaping of the harvest, there must have been a sowing of the seed. When we think of sowing, our minds turn to the parable spoken by the Savior:

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

"And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

"Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

"And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

"But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." (Matthew 13:3-8.)

Sowing of seed is important; otherwise, there would be no harvest, and as stated in the parable, there must be good ground to bring forth a good harvest. Plowing must have been done before the sowing or there would have been no seedbed.

Of all the work of the field, plow-work is the heaviest labor. It is primary and fundamental—it is pioneer toil. A seed may be dropped anywhere, and there is no resistance, but put the blade of the plow into the ground and a thousand forces join to oppose the change. To disturb the conventional, to overturn the traditional, or to attempt to make changes in the deep-rooted way of doing things in the lives of individuals, requires toil and sweat. The heaviest work in the kingdom of God is to turn the hard surface of the earth which has been baked in the sun or covered by the growth of nature. What a great change comes over land which has been cleared and plowed,—row after row of evenly spaced furrows, the sub-surface loosened and exposed to the

sun and air and the rains from heaven, ready to be broken up and planted to seed. The wilderness is conquered and subdued.

Those who become disciples of the Master and put their hands to the plow without turning back prove themselves to be worthy plowmen. By turning over the old surfaces of tradition, they prepared the fields for the introduction and the spread of Christianity into the world.

We do not need to go back to the time of Christ, however, to find fields to plow. Fields exist today all over the world, and missionaries have been called and have put their hands to the plow. Nearly 15,000 stake and full-time missionaries are now in the fields. Furrows are being cut and seeds planted, and every day we see the results of the harvest.

And there is the field of education. Hundreds of plowmen are preparing the field for the harvest. They are teaching the principles of truth to our young men and young women in the Church educational system. About 63,000 high school students are presently enrolled in seminary classes, 9,500 college students are participating in the institute program of religious education, and approximately 17,000 students are enrolled in Church schools. In all, about 90,000 young people are being given direction in life by those who have put their hands to the plow.

Not many years ago we entered into the field of assisting those in need by the great welfare program. The plowshares were driven in and the soil turned over, disclosing the hidden possibilities of our arising to full stature in being our brothers' keeper. Men and women have joined in the labor of the field, and thousands have been helped and aided in the Lord's way, when in need.

We have in Church leadership great plowmen with firm hands and stout hearts—stake presidents and mission presidents—determined men who work in the fields. Bishops, branch presidents, heads of priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations are toiling in their assigned fields. Close at home and

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in distant countries new lands are being broken up by these plowmen, and the subsurface exposed to the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Is it hard work? Of course, but that which is worthwhile is seldom easy. As individuals we have a responsibility to plow. Some accept the opportunity, but some shrink from the responsibility. Some of those who commence cut only a short furrow and then leave the field for what appears to be escape from the toil to follow the false illusion of the ease which they had left behind. Their plowshares are left to rust in the furrow.

Whatever the past may have been in our individual lives, it is gone. The future lies ahead, and we must face it with resolution. There is always a point from which we can begin. Even though we may have been faithful in the past, if we turn away, that faithfulness will profit us nothing. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

There is danger in looking backward. One must keep his eyes ahead in order to cut a straight furrow. When the plowman commences to look backward, he cuts a crooked furrow, and his work is spoiled. We cannot continue to walk forward when at the same time we are looking backward. It makes no difference what object or occasion causes us to look backward, the backward glance commences the backward turning, and may be the beginning of our disendowment in the kingdom of God.

As plowing requires an eye intent on the furrow to be made and is marred when one looks backward, so will they come short of exaltation who prosecute the work of God with a distracted attention or a divided heart. We may not see clearly the end of the furrow, but we dare not look back. Eternity stretches on ahead, challenging us to be faithful.

"And thus, if ye are faithful ye shall be laden with many sheaves, and crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life." (D&C 75:5.)

God lives. I witness that Jesus is the Christ; that the gospel has been returned to the earth; that Joseph Smith

was the servant and prophet raised up for the purpose of the restoration; that there lives today a prophet to reveal to us God's will in all things, and with all my heart I sustain President David O. McKay as that prophet, seer, and revelator.

May we put our hands to the plow and not look backward, that we may be fit for a place in the kingdom of God, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve.

The Primary Teachers Chorus will now favor us with "Beautiful Savior." Please note that designation—"Primary Teachers." They are representing a large group of teachers throughout the entire Church who are leading into the light of truth, in righteous conduct, upright living, tens of thousands—hundreds of thousands—of your children under 12 years of age. What a force for good! Teachers, we welcome you, not only as singers, but as keepers of the souls of our children.

You have heard the Presiding Bishopric. They keep charge of all young boys from 12 up to 21—hundreds of thousands under their instruction. You will hear this afternoon, and have a chance to vote for those other officers throughout the Church who are watchers on the towers of Zion.

Our hearts go out in gratitude to God for the organization of this Church, and the protection it gives to the children and youth of Zion, and to all who are responsible for the establishing of peace on earth and good will towards men.

The Primary Teachers' Chorus will now favor us with "Beautiful Savior," conducted by Sister Lue Groesbeck. The benediction will be offered by Elder George B. Glade, president of the Park Stake, after which this Conference will stand adjourned until 2 o'clock this afternoon. The music this afternoon will be furnished also