

Sunday, April 10

Third Day

President N. Eldon Tanner:

We have just listened to Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

Following a brief organ interlude we shall hear from Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve.

Organ interlude by Elder Alexander Schreiner.

President N. Eldon Tanner:

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

Elder Benson.

ELDER EZRA T. BENSON

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Humbly I approach this sacred assignment on this glorious Easter Sunday.

Today as a great Christian nation—a nation with a spiritual foundation—we join the Christian world in commemoration of that all-important and glorious event—the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Testimony of Jesus Christ

I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the world, the very Son of God.

He was born the Babe of Bethlehem.

He lived and ministered among men.

He was crucified on Calvary.

He is risen—really resurrected.

He has appeared to men as a glorified Eternal King—in Palestine and also in America.

I bear this witness to all, but direct my remarks today especially to our youth of the free world for whom I have great hope and a fervent prayer.

My text, from Luke in the New Testament, stands out boldly in its impressive beauty. It covers a period of 18 years following the return of Jesus from Jerusalem to Nazareth. Except for this one rich sentence of greatest import, the scriptures for this 18-year period are silent:

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” (Luke 2:52.)

Here then in one sentence—14 words—is the impressive, meaningful, and comprehensive account of 18 years of preparation of the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

From these impressively simple words of Luke we can well take inspiration for this hour:

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”

Here in broad outline, in one succinct sentence—four points—are given the major fields of man’s activity and striving—mental, physical, spiritual, and social.

People; all-important

Young men and women, remember, it is people—not things—that are all-important. Character is the one thing we make in this world and take with us into the next. God’s purpose is to build people of character, not physical monuments to their material accumulations.

Point 1: “And Jesus increased in wisdom. . . .”

In the 14th chapter of John, Jesus is tenderly saying his farewell to his disciples after the last supper. He tells them that he goes to prepare a place for them in his Father’s house; that where he is, they also may be. And Thomas says to him:

“Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?”

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:5-6.) The road lies before us. It is clearly marked.

Wisdom and understanding

In Proverbs we read: “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man

that getteth understanding." (Prov. 3:13.)

This same Jesus who increased in wisdom declared to a modern prophet: "Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be rich." (D&C 6:7.)

It was once thought, and still is in some places, that when a young man sets out upon a quest for academic knowledge, his faith in God would soon be destroyed. Our youth generally are living proof to the contrary. It is not the search for knowledge—nor knowledge itself—that costs a man his faith. It is rather the conceit of small minds proving anew that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. It is intellectual pride that leads one to think he is self-sufficient in matters of mind and of spirit. Let us ever realize the vast difference that exists between discovery of the truth and the custodian of all truth. The one is human; the other is divine.

Truth through religion and science

Religion and science have sometimes been in apparent conflict. Yet the conflict should only be apparent, not real, for science should seek truth, and true religion is truth. There can never be conflict between revealed religion and scientific fact. That they have often occupied different fields of truth is a mere detail. The gospel accepts and embraces all truth; science is slowly expanding her arms and reaching into the invisible domain in search of truth. The two are meeting daily—science as a child, revealed religion as the mother. Truth is truth, whether labeled science or religion. There can be no conflict. Time is on the side of truth—for truth is eternal.

Yes, truth is always consistent, whether it is revealed direct from God to man through his inspired prophets or comes from the laboratory through the diligent searching of his children and the influence of the spirit of the Lord upon them.

Youth of the free nations, you face a changing world beset with many perplexities. But while change is and will

continue to be all about us in the physical world, we must recognize that there are certain heaven-sent verities, principles, and values that are eternal. These never change.

As you travel life's highway, you will encounter theories, proposals, and programs that have wide appeal. You will be required to pass your judgment on them. Be not misled. Remember that ideas and theories are either sound or unsound; soundness does not depend upon which men hold them.

Our inability to explain a thing in terms of our materialism does not disprove its reality.

"Opinions at variance with time-honored beliefs, although receiving considerable current acceptance, may not always rest on truth." It is the truth that endures. It is the truth that makes men courageous enough to become Christlike. It is the truth that makes men and nations free. Yes, be intelligent. Intelligence is the wise and judicious use of knowledge.

Continue to grow mentally—to grow in wisdom—to grow in truth. Desire it! Pray for it! Study it! Practice it!

Do all this and you will find truth; it cannot be denied you. Having found it, never forget its source, remembering always that "the glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth." (D&C 93:36.)

"And Jesus increased in wisdom. . . ." Like the master, in whose footsteps you should follow, may you constantly increase in wisdom.

Gain stature

Point 2: "And Jesus increased in . . . stature. . . ."

You, the youth of the free world, are the trustees of posterity. The future of your country will, sooner than you think, rest in your hands and those of your contemporaries.

Be worthy trustees. Continue to grow in stature.

Be cheerful in all that you do. Live joyfully. Live happily. Live enthusiastically, knowing that God does not dwell in gloom and melancholy, but in light and love.

A clean mind in a healthy body will enable you to render far more effective service to others. It will help you to provide more vigorous leadership. It will give your every experience in life more zest and meaning. Robust health is a noble and worthwhile attainment.

Possibly the best measure of the stature of men or women is in their own homes, at their own firesides. Some of you have already established homes. Practically all of you will do so. As you look hopefully forward, what conclusions have you reached about marriage, the home, and family?

Are you planning for honorable parenthood even at the sacrifice perhaps of parties, clubs, and other social enticements? Parenthood carries with it peculiar responsibilities. Are you planning to accept these without quibbling? Are you willing to accept and enthrone motherhood as the highest calling of woman?

No nation rises above its homes. In building character the church, the school, and even the nation stand helpless when confronted with a weakened and degraded home. The good home is the rock foundation—the cornerstone of civilization. There can be no genuine happiness separate and apart from a good home, with the old-fashioned virtues at its base. If your nation is to endure, the home must be safeguarded, strengthened, and restored to its rightful importance.

Remember that moral purity is an eternal principle. Its violation destroys the noblest qualities and aspirations of man. Purity is life-giving; unchastity is deadly.

Moral purity is one of the greatest bulwarks of successful homemaking. Happy and successful homes—let alone individual lives—cannot be built on immorality.

Youthful sweethearts, be true to God's holy laws. Remember they cannot be broken with impunity. If you would be happy and successful in your early association, courtship, and home-building, conform your lives to the eternal laws of heaven. There is no other way.

And in so doing you shall increase "in stature."

Favor with God and man

Point 3: "And Jesus increased . . . in favour with . . . man."

The formula for successful relationships with others boils down to that divine code known as the Golden Rule:

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. . . ." (Matt. 7:12.)

It was the Master who said:

". . . whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." (Matt. 20:27.)

Unselfish, willing service to others was the keynote of his relationship with men.

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45.)

Love one another. Serve your fellowmen. The example has been given you. The road lies clearly before you.

If we would serve God through service to our brethren, we shall have need of a love for work.

Energetic, purposeful work leads to vigorous health, praiseworthy achievement, a clear conscience, and refreshing sleep. It has always been a boon to man. Have a wholesome respect for labor, whether with head, heart, or hand. Accept the challenge given by one of America's eminent journalists, Edward W. Bok:

Vigorous participation

"When you are called to get into the game, get into it good and strong. There's no fun in going through life spoon-fed; in finding the soft seat. That makes a man soft, and a soft man is an abomination before God and man. And put everything you've got into it. Take hold and carry the biggest load your shoulders can carry, and then carry it right. Set the pace for others; don't let them set it for you."

Honest toil

May you ever enjoy the satisfaction of honest toil. The decree that by the sweat of his brow man should eat bread is still basic. You will never wish or dream yourself into heaven. You

must pay the price in toil, in sacrifice, and in righteous living.

It is a truism that "security is achieved, not bestowed." It cannot be gained by self-pity or compromising principles. The world owes no man a living.

Youth of the world, as you strive to increase in favor with man, be ever on your guard that you do not unwittingly, in the name of tolerance, broadmindedness, and so-called liberalism, encourage foreign "isms" and unsound theories that strike at the very root of all we hold dear, including our faith in God. Proposals will be offered and programs will be sponsored that have wide, so-called "humanitarian" appeal. Attractive labels are usually attached to the most dangerous programs, often in the name of public welfare and personal security.

Apply standard of truth

Have the courage to apply this standard of truth. Determine what the effect of the various issues at stake is upon the character, the integrity, and freedom of man. Which increase his freedom? Which abrogate or destroy? Which recognize and respect the individual dignity of man?

We have the greatest material wealth ever known because we are free, and our people have been encouraged to produce it—out of themselves.

It is foolish to place our material wealth first and decide that it, rather than the freedom and energy that produced it, is our real wealth.

Freedom, a willingness to work, and the desire to serve your God through service to your fellowmen—these are the sources of true wealth. Cling fast to these truths, and you must inevitably increase in favor with man. "And Jesus increased . . . in favour . . . with man."

Point 4: "And Jesus increased . . . in favour with God. . . ."

Seek first the Kingdom of God

This is the most important of all man's strivings—without it, nothing is of the slightest account.

"For what shall it profit a man, if

he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36.)

Growing in favor with God is the most important because it is the veritable foundation upon which all other worthwhile blessings rest. Concerning this fact the Savior admonished his disciples:

" . . . seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33.)

Spiritual strength promotes positive thinking, positive ideals, positive habits, positive attitudes, and positive efforts. These are the qualities that promote wisdom, physical and mental well-being, and enthusiastic acceptance and response by others. "Favour with God" gives necessary incentive and perspective to life. It gives man real purpose for living and achieving.

As always, we have the example of the Master to guide us. "My meat," he said, "is to do the will of him that sent me. . . ." (John 4:34.)

And again: "Father, . . . I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." (John 17:1, 4.)

Faithful in duty

We increase in favor with God as we do the will of God. Let us be faithful in the work he gives us, whatever it may be and whatever our station in life. Let our desires be in harmony with God's will as it is revealed to us—keeping his word in our hearts—conquering selfish desires that would lead us astray.

If we would advance in holiness—increase in favor with God—nothing can take the place of prayer. And so I adjure you to give prayer—daily prayer—secret prayer—a foremost place in your lives. Let no day pass without it. Communion with the Almighty has been a source of strength, inspiration, and enlightenment to men and women through the world's history who have shaped the destinies of individuals and nations for good.

Will you value and take advantage of the opportunity to tap these unseen but very real spiritual powers? Will

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you, with Lincoln before Gettysburg and Washington at Valley Forge, humble yourselves before Almighty God in fervent prayer?

Prayer will help you understand the apparent conflicts in life—to know that God lives, that life is eternal.

Be not ashamed to believe and proclaim that God lives, that he is the Father of our spirits; that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world; that the resurrection is a reality; that we lived as spirits before mortal birth and will live again as immortal beings through the eternities to come. Blessed are you if you have a testimony of these things. These great spiritual truths have seen systems come and go, and so it will be in the future. These truths will, if you are wise, take precedence in your lives over all contrary theories, dogmas, or hypotheses from whatever source or by whomsoever advocated.

Therefore, go forward intelligently and yield simple and loyal obedience to all the laws of the universe and the truths of eternity.

Yours is a great responsibility in this day when the need for courageous leadership is so urgent:

You can become those leaders!

Young men and women of the Free World, yours is a great challenge. You can be choice spirits in your land. Forget not that each of you has been endowed with the priceless gift of free agency. Each of you is, in very deed, the master of your fate, and Christ should be the captain of your soul. You need not be the victims of circumstance, for unto you it is given to achieve and become "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.)

Jesus lives today. He is risen. This I know.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

May you, by following this same

path, merit the same commendation. For if you follow this divine pattern established by the resurrected Christ, you cannot fail, for you will have fulfilled the measure of your creation.

Yes, Jesus Christ is divine. He lives today. He was resurrected. He is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

I bear this witness and pray that the young men and women of all the world may be blessed with a testimony of this all-important truth, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner:

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve has been our concluding speaker.

We express our thanks and appreciation to the Choir for their inspirational singing. We are grateful for the warm response from the managers and operators of the many television and radio stations in offering their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to millions throughout North America, South America, Africa and many other parts of the world.

We shall now conclude this sixth session of the 136th annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with the Tabernacle Choir singing "For the Trumpet Shall Sound," with Talmadge D. Robinson as soloist. Richard P. Condie is conducting and Alexander Schreiner is at the organ.

Following the singing the benediction will be pronounced by Elder Jack S. Daley, president of the St. Joseph Stake. This conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

The Choir sang, "For the Trumpet Shall Sound."

Elder Jack S. Daley, president of St. Joseph Stake offered the closing prayer.