

Friday, September 30

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when Jesus first promulgated them, and they will remain fundamental and essential in man's progress and happiness as long as life and being last.

In the questioning days of early boyhood, I first felt a kinship with Christ, our Lord and Savior. I know his love and his divine guidance. He is the sinless Son of man. "He is the first and the last . . . and [is] alive for evermore." (See Rev. 1:18.) Only by obedience to his teachings can man find happiness and peace. Our Father is a kind and loving Heavenly Father who is as ready and eager today as ever to bless and to guide all his

children who will sincerely seek him, and I bear you witness to that truth.

God help us all to walk in the light as he is in the light, thereby avoiding the unhappiness, sinfulness, and misery of a misguided world, and find joy and peace and beautiful life here in this probation and in the life to come, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown:

Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

Elder Thomas S. Monson
Of the Council of the Twelve

President McKay, I know that I speak the innermost thoughts of all assembled here and those listening and watching by radio and television everywhere in expressing a prayer to our Heavenly Father, wherein we would say,

"We thank thee, O God, for a prophet, to guide us in these latter days." (William Fowler, *Hymns* 196.) As a part of that prayer, I would also include another feeling of gratitude, an expression of appreciation to President McKay, for the precious privilege that he has afforded me, together with Elder Paul H. Dunn, to work so closely with Polynesia's people scattered upon the isles of the sea.

Polynesian paradise threatened

The choir brings to us a message of hope, of gratitude, of peace. However, the daily newspaper from distant Tahiti tells of fear, frustration, and conflict, for on the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa, thermonuclear testing has begun. Atomic and hydrogen explosions thrust a new dimension upon Polynesia. One native was heard to say, "The kiss of death has been bestowed upon Tahiti, the queen of the islands of the Pacific." Well might we who most love these people ask the perplexing question, "Has paradise caught up with progress, or has progress overtaken paradise?"

But then, the people of Polynesia have survived a variety of threats from a multitude of sources through many periods of time.

When Captain James Cook and his ship's crew of the *Endeavor* first sailed into Matavai Bay in the mid-1700's, they found a literal Polynesian paradise, with fresh water in torrents and flowers and fruit everywhere. They found a people every bit as beautiful as their surroundings. There was food all around them: fish in the lagoons, breadfruit and coconuts in the branches overhead, bananas, yams, and sugarcane growing wild in prolific abundance. For the most part, the people knew no sickness, except the gentle decline into old age and death. But then came what has been called the "fatal impact" of European civilization. Firearms, disease, alcohol, an alien code of laws became a threat to the people and their culture, just as the current products of our advanced society pose the threats of today.

But Polynesia remains synonymous with paradise. The word itself, meaning "many islands," is descriptive of the area of Polynesia that covers a major portion of the Pacific Ocean. Geographically, it is bounded roughly by an imaginary triangle drawn from Hawaii southward to New Zealand, thence eastward to Easter Island, and thence back to Hawaii. Here we find

major island groups, large volcanic islands, smaller coral atolls, and tiny, uninhabited islets.

Blessings to the Polynesians

Robert Louis Stevenson described the Polynesian sky as "immoderately blue"; but for the Polynesians themselves, he reserved the fitting tribute: ". . . the sweetest people God ever made." Polynesians are friendly, loving, handsome, and intelligent people. Their history is exciting, their spoken words like a beautiful melody, their hospitality genuine, and their beauty legendary.

Many ask, "Why are these people so bounteously blessed?" "Why do returning missionaries always retain in their hearts a love for the islands and their people?" "Why do Polynesia's people so love the Lord?" The answer is found recorded in sacred scripture: "Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea. . . ." (2 Ne. 29:7.) ". . . great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea." (2 Ne. 10:21.)

These promises, these gifts from God, are apparent to those who visit Polynesia. May I invite you today, for a few moments, to accompany me on a journey to the islands of the Pacific and look in on Polynesia's people, that we might learn of God's gifts to them. Whether we stop at New Zealand among the Maori, at Samoa, "the heart of the South Seas," at Nuku'alofa, Tonga, in the Friendly Islands, at Papeete in Tahiti, or at beautiful Rarotonga, we find people who are recipients of choice and cherished gifts.

Gifts of the Polynesians

Time permits a review of but five such gifts. I have chosen the gift of song, the gift of faith, the gift of love, the gift of obedience, and the gift of gratitude.

Gift of song

We have witnessed today an expression of this gift of song. Polynesians

need no formal lessons in music. Their voices are naturally resonant, their ears tuned to melody. A ukulele is as common to a lad there as a jackknife is to a boy here. Dancing and song become parts of a way of life.

Just this past June in New Zealand a tragic drowning claimed the lives of two instructors at the Church College at Temple View. The young widows and their children were overcome by grief and heartache. Many well-wishing and sympathetic friends offered words of consolation, but the remorse remained. There came a soft knock at the door; a group of Maori Saints entered the room. Not a word was spoken, but song came forth from their lips and hearts. The bereaved families received a sustaining influence that accompanied them through the lonely and long journey homeward and even today turns tears of sorrow to warm smiles of gratitude. ". . . the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me [sayeth the Lord], and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads." (D&C 25:12.) The Polynesians have the gift of song.

Gift of faith

The gift of faith, which they also enjoy, at times takes the form of miraculous healings of body and mind. In other instances it is reflected by simple trust and calm assurance that God will provide.

On my first visit to the fabled village of Sauniatu, so loved by President McKay, my wife and I met with a large gathering of small children. At the conclusion of our messages to these shy, yet beautiful, youngsters, I suggested to the native Samoan teacher that we go forward with the closing exercises. As he announced the final hymn, I suddenly felt compelled to personally greet each of these 247 children. My watch revealed that the time was too short for such a privilege, so I discounted the impression. Before the benediction was to be spoken, I again felt this strong impression to shake the hand of each child. This time I made the desire known to the instructor, who displayed a broad and beautiful Samoan smile. He spoke in Samoan to the children,

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and they beamed their approval of his comments.

The instructor then revealed to me the reason for his and their joy. He said, "When we learned that President McKay had assigned a member of the Council of the Twelve to visit us in far-away Samoa, I told the children if they would each one earnestly and sincerely pray and exert faith like the Bible accounts of old, that the Apostle would visit our tiny village at Sauniatu, and through their faith, he would be impressed to greet each child with a personal handclasp." Tears could not be restrained as each of those precious boys and girls walked shyly by and whispered softly to us a sweet *talofa lava*. The gift of faith had been evidenced.

Gift of love

The gift of love is found throughout Polynesia: a love of God, a love of sacred things, and love for family, friends, and fellowmen. At Papeete, Tahiti, I met a distinguished yet humble man, extraordinarily blessed with the gift of love. He was 84-year-old Tahauri Hutihuti from the island of Takaroa in the Taumotu Island group. A faithful Church member all his life, he had longed for the day when there would be in the Pacific a holy temple of God. He had a love for the sacred ordinances he knew could only be performed in such a house. Patiently, and with purpose, he carefully saved his meager earnings as a pearl diver. When the New Zealand Temple was completed and opened, he took from beneath his bed his life savings of \$600, accumulated over a 40-year span; and together with loved ones, he journeyed to the temple and thereby brought a fond dream to final fulfillment.

As I said a tender good-bye to the Tahitians, each one came forward, placed an exquisite shell lei about my neck, and left an affectionate kiss upon my cheek. Tahauri, who did not speak English, stood by my side and spoke to me through an interpreter. The interpreter listened attentively and then, turning to me, reported: "Tahauri says he has no gift to be-

stow except the love of a full heart." Tahauri clasped my hand and kissed my cheek. Of all the gifts received that memorable night, the gift of this faithful man remains the brightest.

Gift of obedience

Allied with this gift of love is the gift of obedience. When a Polynesian hears God's Prophet speak, he obeys. When he sings, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet," he sings with his heart, as well as his voice, and the walls resound.

Lauvale Tialavea, a counselor in the Samoan Mission presidency, typifies the spirit of obedience. He is handsome in appearance, sincere in his testimony, and responds to each call with seldom equalled enthusiasm. A convert to the Church, he formerly studied for the ministry of another faith. Intelligent, educated, keen thinking, and fearless, his actions demonstrate his love for the newly found truth that is his very life. A kind husband and father of ten, he has, since his baptism in 1961, taught the gospel to many hundreds of persons and has himself baptized 174 as they have entered the kingdom of God.

Ridiculed by the unbelievers for lifting his voice in testimony, stoned for his teaching of the truth, mocked for his adherence to a rigid code of conduct, he courageously tells others of an apostasy from the Church that followed the death of the Lord and his apostles, and of the restoration of the gospel in this dispensation through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I asked, "What provides your incentive, your strength to carry on such a missionary crusade amidst such a storm of protest?" He replied: "Our prophet, God's mouthpiece, has asked that 'every member be a missionary.' My desire is to be obedient to the Prophet." I thought of the words of Samuel: "... to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. 15:22.) I heard the clarion call of Joshua: "... as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Josh. 24:15.) To these people, obedience is a gift, and they honor it.

Gift of gratitude

I introduce next the gift of gratitude. Late one evening on a Pacific isle, a small boat slipped silently to its berth at the crude pier. Two Polynesian women helped Meli Mulipola from the boat and guided him to the well-worn pathway leading to the village road. The women marveled at the bright stars that twinkled in the midnight sky. The friendly moonlight guided them along their way. However, Meli Mulipola could not appreciate these delights of nature—the moon, the stars, the sky—for he was blind.

His vision had been normal until that fateful day when, while working on a pineapple plantation, light turned suddenly to darkness and day became perpetual night. He had learned of the restoration of the gospel and teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His life had been brought into compliance with these teachings.

He and his loved ones had made this long voyage, having learned that one who held the priesthood of God was visiting among the islands. He sought a blessing under the hands of those who held the sacred priesthood. His wish was granted, a blessing provided. Tears streamed from his sightless eyes and coursed down his brown cheeks, tumbling finally upon his native dress. He dropped to his knees and prayed: "Oh God, thou knowest I am blind. Thy servants have blessed me that my sight return. Whether in thy wisdom I see light or whether I see darkness all the days of my life, I will be eternally grateful for the truth of thy gospel which I now see and which provides the light of my life." He arose to his feet, thanked us for providing the blessing, and disappeared into the still of night. Silently he came. Silently he departed. But his presence I shall never forget. I reflected upon the message of the Master: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12.)

There came to me an appreciation of these gifts of God to Polynesia's people: The gift of song, the gift of faith,

the gift of love, the gift of obedience, and the gift of gratitude. But such gifts were suddenly dwarfed as I remembered God's greatest gift, given not only to the Polynesians, but to you, to me, and to all persons everywhere—the gift of his Only Begotten and precious Son, Jesus Christ.

We may never open gates of cities or doors of palaces, but we will find true happiness and lasting joy when there enters our heart and soul a knowledge and understanding of this supreme gift. "He comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, when he came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same words, 'Follow thou me,' and sets us to the tasks that he has to fulfill for our time. He commands; and to those who obey him, whether they be wise or simple, he will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings that they shall pass through in his fellowship; and they shall learn in their own experience who he is." (Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*.)

Like a bright searchlight of truth, his gospel will direct our journey along the pathways of life. Oh, how blessed are we to have this never dimming, always glowing hope and the eternal knowledge that belongs to us and that we share with the world: that the gospel has been restored to earth, that God lives, that Jesus is his Son, our elder brother, our mediator with the Father, our Lord and our Savior, God's greatest gift to us.

May our Heavenly Father bless us with an appreciation of his sacrifice; may our lives reflect our gratitude, I ask in the name, the blessed name, of Jesus Christ, God's gift to us. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown:

The Choir and Congregation will now join in singing, "Now Let Us Rejoice in the Day of Salvation."

After the singing, Elder Paul H. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy will speak to us.

Congregational Singing: "Now Let Us Rejoice."
