

Saturday, April 4

First Day

the sight of God. In merging the eternal principles of justice and mercy, an equitable decision or result occurs, as was evidenced in this beautiful parable.

### God is just and merciful

I bear you my witness that God the Father and the Son live, and that they are just and merciful beings. Their justice and mercy was shown through the atonement of Jesus Christ and in restoring the gospel in its fullness through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And we should be grateful for God's mercy in providing a prophet to lead us today—President Joseph Fielding Smith. May the Lord bless and sustain him.

Those who are seeking a plan of life that will bring them peace, relief from inner tensions, happiness, and growth and development will find it in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We invite your sincere and prayerful consideration.

The strength of the Church lies in the testimony of its members that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, and that God is a just and merciful God.

To acquire eternal life requires devotion to the gospel principles. May we appreciate the blessings of the gos-

pel and dedicate ourselves to the upbuilding of God's kingdom, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

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The Tabernacle Choir then sang two songs as follows: "Redeemed of the Lord," and "All Creatures of Our God and King."

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### President Harold B. Lee

The Tabernacle Choir has sung "Redeemed of the Lord," and "All Creatures of Our God and King."

Following a brief organ interlude, Elder Richard L. Evans of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will then be our concluding speaker.

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Alexander Schreiner played a brief organ interlude.

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### President Lee:

Elder Richard L. Evans of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now be our concluding speaker.

## Elder Richard L. Evans

### *Of the Council of the Twelve*

● May I make two citations from the words of a discerning editorial writer, not one of my faith, but one of much faith: "If we neglect the divine . . . and give ourselves over wholly to the human," he said, "we may certainly count upon nothing but the triumph of pessimism. . . . True optimism must rest upon a calm, unshakable faith in eternal life and in the unlimited goodness of him who gives it."<sup>1</sup>

"We rest on no new reason for believing in the immortality of the soul," he continued. "The old reasons . . . are

quite sufficient . . . all religious faith and all hope of immortality begins with God, and rests on him. We came from him; we go to him. He lives, we live. . . . [And] why should not a Father reveal himself to his children? Why should he not send prophets and teachers, and why not a supreme Teacher, a Son of God and a Son of Man? . . . We rest on the fact of One who died and rose from the dead, whose name we give to our faith, and whose triumph over death is our triumph also."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Editorial, *The Independent*, 1898, p. 1596.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, April 12, 1900.

### Personal reality of God

This brings us to a declaration of the literal personal reality of God and the divinity of his Son, our Savior, and the reality of revelation, of prophets, and of the opportunities and purposes of everlasting life.

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Article of Faith 1)—not in theory, not as an undefinable essence, but a God of life and of love, *who lives*, and in whose image men were made.

"We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." (Article of Faith 9.)

### Present day prophets

Surely there is ample evidence of the counsel and divine calling of the prophets of the past. And surely there is ample evidence of the need all men have for divine guidance in this day.

In recent weeks we have lost by death a dearly beloved prophet, President David O. McKay. Our love and blessings reach out to his family, and to the beloved companion who was some sixty-nine years by his side.

And today we have heard from his beloved successor, President Joseph Fielding Smith, who will be presented for our sustaining vote in the days of this conference to come. God bless him and be with him and strengthen him, and give him peace, and all that pertains to the goodness of life, with his loved ones.

### Need for continuous revelation

Through prayer, impressions, inspiration, revelation, God does communicate with his children. The need for continuous revelation would seem to be obvious. There is infinitely much our Father hasn't yet told us. There is infinitely much that no man knows.

Who knows of a textbook that won't be revised or set aside? Who knows of a theory that won't be modified or abandoned? Who knows of a process that won't be improved? Who knows

when the last findings of research will be found, or when the last revelation of the mind and will of God will be given? Humility before the unknown is always in order. Conceit of learning never is.

Who has any idea that we need divine guidance less today than did those in far places in the past? Prophets, prophecy, scripture, counsel, commandments are part of the precious heritage we have.

### Life's purpose

Now, what of life, its purpose, its problems, its possibilities? All of us have our unanswered questions, our discouragement, our mistakes, our good and poor performances, our sorrows, our searching.

It's a searching world. But many are looking for the right things in the wrong way. Some give themselves to protest, to tearing down, to destruction—but most tragically to destruction of themselves, their minds, their peace, their happiness, their future possibilities. And, as to all of this, on a recent Sunday broadcast we used a sentence that has some earnest implications in it, which we submit for your consideration:

### Home, the place to begin

If we don't change direction, we will arrive at where we're going.

Home, of course, is the place to begin. "When one puts business or pleasure above his home," said President McKay, "he that moment starts on the downgrade to soul-weakness." And in the last talk we were privileged to have from him, he said: "The most vicious enemy to home life is immorality."<sup>3</sup>

I heard a few days ago a report of how a parent had criticized a school principal for not teaching her children better behavior. But surely the home is the place to begin. Parents, teach your children, and live and be what you teach. I remember gratefully, soberly within my soul, saying prayers at the knees of a beloved widowed mother. I remember her saying to us, and living

<sup>3</sup> October 1969 general conference.

what she said: "Do your duty. Say your prayers. Pay your tithing; pay your debts. Be honest. Work. Be clean. Don't quarrel. Don't gossip. Have faith."

Oh, beloved young people, listen to such teachings, and so live your lives. Don't gamble the peace and happiness and opportunities of eternity against the cheap and shoddy enticements of time.

### Our precious heritage

You can't experiment with everything—there isn't enough time. There are thousands of things that could kill you, but you have only one life to lose. There are thousands of things that could destroy you mentally, morally, physically, spiritually. And not one of them is worth it. And so, profit by what has already been proved, by the trial and error and anguish of others over the ages. If everyone tried to go back to the beginning to repeat all the mistakes that other men have made, we wouldn't live long enough to learn very much. Part of the precious heritage we have is what has been proved, discovered, and revealed in the past. And so accept it, and go on from here, and learn and repent and improve, and become all you can become, not destroying body and mind, peace and self-respect, but seeking counsel, confiding in loved ones, living by law. Anyone who thinks he doesn't need counsel and stubbornly decides to go his own way has trouble and tragedy ahead.

### Seek counsel and guidance

Counsel with parents, your bishops, competent and trustworthy people. President Smith counsels with his counselors. The Council of the Twelve counsel with each other and with their brethren. "There is no such thing in human existence as being so high you're not responsible to anybody."<sup>4</sup> No man is smart enough to know all the answers. No man is so wise that he cannot benefit by talking things out with others. (There was a great council in heaven, before the world was.)

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence A. Appley, "Managers in Action."

And don't forget to talk things out with the Lord. And then listen. As President Harold B. Lee said within the week, "We pray for guidance—but do we *listen*?" The communication of prayer is very real, and all of us need guidance in our decisions.

### Do not tempt temptation

Temptation is everywhere. The opportunities to do evil and to do good are everywhere, but we shouldn't tempt temptation. As one whimsical observer said, "When some people flee from temptation, they leave a forwarding address."<sup>5</sup> If we don't want to do wrong, we shouldn't even entertain the idea. If we don't want temptation to follow us, we shouldn't act as if we are interested. No one ever fell over a precipice who never went near one.

### Laws still in force

And let it be said here that our Father in heaven is not a theorist. Creation isn't kept in its course by theory. Spring doesn't return by theory. Seeds don't grow by theory. The physical and moral and spiritual laws are still in force. The commandments are still in force. No one has repealed them. No one has a right to—except God, who gave them. And when our Father gives us counsel or commandments, we can be sure they are vitally essential. When he tells us something, we'd better believe it. If we live one way we get one result; if we live another way we get another result.

### Miracle of repentance

Many of you would be familiar with President Spencer Kimball's wonderful work on the miracle of forgiveness. I witness to you that God is a loving Father who will forgive and help us find peace and self-respect as we repent and show our sincerity by the lives we live. And there is nothing he asks of us that we cannot do; there is no requirement we cannot keep—if we are willing, if we want to. Repentance is a miracle, if it is sincere.

<sup>5</sup> Rotary International club bulletin, Graham, Texas.

Some historians have said there have been 19 civilizations before this that have risen and flourished and fallen, mostly because of moral decay. And perhaps most of them didn't really know what was happening, until it was too late. We are not immune to the consequences of our own acts, or of what we permit to become possible.

You would remember the words spoken on the occasion of that first awesome step man took on the moon: "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind,"<sup>6</sup> to which another added:

"We've reached so far that we've touched the moon;

Now we must reach out to our neighbor. . . .

There isn't a thing that man cannot do if he takes one small step at a time"<sup>7</sup>

—if he lives within law, keeps the commandments and follows the purposes of Divine Providence.

#### Live by God's counsel

God bless you, my beloved young friends. Don't live by rumor. Don't run aimlessly to and fro looking for what has already been found. Don't live by the sophistries and temptations of these times. Live by the counsel and commandments God has given, and find the peace and happiness that come to one through thoughtful, prayerful living and cleanliness of life.

The times are troubled. The problems are many. And men do run to and fro, and the hearts of many do fail them, and fear has come upon many people—but there is a God in heaven whose purposes and promises and power are over all, and if we will commit ourselves to keeping his counsels, his commandments, doing it his way, we can have peace and happiness here, and limitless, everlasting opportunities with our loved ones forever.

Who would be so foolishly, stupidly shortsighted as to settle for less than this, here or hereafter?

#### The mission of the Church

The mission, the message of the

<sup>6</sup> Neil A. Armstrong.

<sup>7</sup> R. Harris, "One Small Step."

Church is to all mankind, and will bless and lift the lives of all who will be partakers of it. And we come to you with concern for the temporal and eternal salvation of every soul—to the weary, the wandering, the lost and the lonely, the sick and the sorrowing; those discouraged and despondent, those who have lost loved ones, those looking for something to hold to in life. Oh, it is there. May our Father help you find it.

I leave you my witness that God does live, that he has reestablished his work among men, that Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer. And I thank God for a prophet in the present, and for all the prophets of the past.

If we don't change direction, we'll arrive at where we're going—but wherever we are, and wherever we've been, if we take one small step at a time, in the right direction, and repent and do better each day, we can arrive everlastingly with our loved ones, with the highest possibilities that God can give, and with assurance within our souls, this day—and always, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

#### President Harold B. Lee

We are most grateful for the warm response from the managers and operators of over 300 television and radio stations in offering their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to millions throughout many areas of the world.

These proceedings are being broadcast over stations in countries of Latin America, Japan and Okinawa by means of satellite transmission.

Through special arrangements of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Network this session will be televised to bases of the Armed Forces throughout the Pacific and heard by radio in Vietnam.

We appreciate the attendance here of educators, national and local government officials, church officials, and all visitors and members who have attended this service this morning.

We shall now conclude this session of the conference with the Tabernacle