

Elder Thomas S. Monson

Of the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brothers and sisters, my heart is full to overflowing. You and I, this memorable day, have been partakers of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is his church. It bears his name. His prophet has lifted each of us beyond the shackles of this earth to the lofty heavens above. Our raised hands are supported by our pledged hearts. The kingdom of God moves forward in its undeviating and eternal course.

Change in Presidency

On a chill day last December, we gathered into this historic Tabernacle to pay honor and tribute to a man whom we loved, honored, and followed—even President Harold B. Lee. Prophetic in his utterance, powerful in his leadership, devoted in his service, President Lee inspired in all of us a desire to achieve perfection. He counseled us, “Keep the commandments of God. Follow the pathway of the Lord.”

One day later, in a very sacred room on an upper floor of the Salt Lake Temple, his successor was chosen, sustained, and set apart to his sacred calling. Untiring in his labor, humble in his manner, inspiring in his testimony, President Spencer W. Kimball invited us to continue the course charted by President Lee. He spoke the same penetrating words, “Keep the commandments of God. Follow the pathway of the Lord. Walk in his footsteps.”

Walking in his footsteps

Later that same evening, I happened to glance at a travel brochure which had arrived at my home several days earlier. It was printed in breathtaking color and written with persuasive skill. The reader was invited to visit the fjords of Norway and the Alps of Swit-

zerland, all in one package tour. Yet another offering beckoned the reader to Bethlehem—even the Holy Land—cradle of Christianity. The closing lines of the brochure’s message contained the simple yet powerful appeal, “Come and walk where Jesus walked.”

My thoughts returned to the counsel God’s prophets—even President Lee and President Kimball—had provided: “Follow the pathway of the Lord. Walk in his footsteps.” I reflected on the words penned by the poet:

I walked today where
Jesus walked,
In days of long ago;
I wandered down each path
He knew,
With rev’rent step and slow.

Those little lanes, they have not
changed—
A sweet peace fills the air.
I walked today where Jesus
walked,
And felt His presence there.

My pathway led through
Bethlehem,
Ah, mem’ries ever sweet;
The little hills of Galilee,
That knew those childish feet;

The Mount of Olives:
hallowed scenes
That Jesus knew before.
I saw the mighty Jordan roll
As in the days of yore.

I knelt today where Jesus knelt,
Where all alone He prayed;
The Garden of Gethsemane—
My heart felt unafraid!

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Second Day

I picked my heavy burden up,
And with Him by my side,
I climbed the Hill
of Calvary,
Where on the cross He died!

I walked today where Jesus
walked
And felt Him close to me!
—Daniel S. Twohig

We need not visit the Holy Land to feel him close to us. We need not walk by the shores of Galilee or among the Judean hills to walk where Jesus walked.

In a very real sense, all can walk where Jesus walked when, with his words on our lips, his spirit in our hearts, and his teachings in our lives, we journey through mortality.

I would hope that we would walk as he walked—with confidence in the future, with an abiding faith in his Father, and a genuine love for others.

The path of disappointment

Jesus walked the *path of disappointment*.

Can one appreciate his lament over the Holy City? "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34.)

The path of temptation

Jesus walked the *path of temptation*.

That evil one, amassing his greatest strength, his most inviting sophistry, tempted him who had fasted for forty days and forty nights and was an hundred. Came the taunt: "... If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." The reply: "Man shall not live by bread alone. ..." Again, "... If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall

give his angels charge concerning thee. ..." The answer: "... Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Still again: "... the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ... will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. ..." The Master replied: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. 4:3-4, 6-10.)

The path of pain

Jesus walked the *path of pain*.

Consider the agony of Gethsemane: "... Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. ..." And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:42, 44.)

And who among us can forget the cruelty of the cross. His words: "... I thirst. ..." It is finished. ..." (John 19:28, 30.)

Yes, each of us will walk the path of disappointment, perhaps due to an opportunity lost, a power misused, or a loved one not taught. The path of temptation, too, will be the path of each. "And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves. ..." (D&C 29:39.)

Likewise shall we walk the path of pain. We cannot go to heaven in a feather bed. The Savior of the world entered after great pain and suffering. We, as servants, can expect no more than the Master. Before Easter there must be a cross.

While we walk these paths which bring forth bitter sorrow, we can also walk those paths which yield eternal joy.

The path of obedience

We, with Jesus, can walk the *path of obedience*.

It will not be easy. "Though he

were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." (Heb. 5:8.) Let our watchword be the heritage bequeathed us by Samuel: ". . . Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam. 15:22.) Let us remember that the end result of disobedience is captivity and death, while the reward for obedience is liberty and eternal life.

The path of service

We, like Jesus, can walk the *path of service*.

Like a glowing searchlight of goodness is the life of Jesus as he ministered among men. He brought strength to the limbs of the cripple, sight to the eyes of the blind, hearing to the ears of the deaf, and life to the body of the dead.

His parables preach power. With the good Samaritan he taught: ". . . love . . . thy neighbour. . ." (Luke 10:27.) Through his kindness to the woman taken in adultery, he taught compassionate understanding. In his parable of the talents, he taught each of us to improve himself and to strive for perfection. Well could he have been preparing us for our journey along his pathway. Why else would he counsel: ". . . Go, and do thou likewise." (Luke 10:37.)

The path of prayer

Finally, he walked the *path of prayer*.

Three great lessons from three timeless prayers. First, from his ministry: ". . . When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. . ." (Luke 11:2.)

Second, from Gethsemane: ". . . not my will, but thine, be done." (Luke 22:42.)

Third, from the cross: ". . . Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. . ." (Luke 23:34.)

It is by walking the path of prayer that we commune with the Father and become partakers of his power.

Following our prophet leader

Shall we have the faith, even the desire, to walk these pathways which Jesus walked? God's prophet, seer, and revelator has this day invited us to do so. All we need do is follow him, for this is the pathway he walks.

My first acquaintance with this prophet leader was 24 years ago when I served as a young bishop here in Salt Lake City. One morning, upon answering my telephone, a voice said, "This is Elder Spencer W. Kimball. I have a favor to ask of you. In your ward, hidden away behind a large building on Fifth South Street, is a tiny trailer home. Living there is Margaret Bird, a Navajo widow. She feels unwanted, unneeded, and lost. Could you and the Relief Society presidency seek her out, extend to her the hand of fellowship, and provide for her a special welcome?" This we did.

A miracle resulted. Margaret Bird blossomed in her newly found environment. Despair disappeared. The widow in her affliction had been visited. The lost sheep had been found. Each who participated in the simple human drama emerged a better person.

In reality, the true shepherd was the concerned apostle who, leaving the ninety and nine of his ministry, went in search of the precious soul who was lost. Spencer W. Kimball had walked the pathway Jesus walked. He did so then. He does so now.

Coming to know Jesus

As you and I walk the pathway Jesus walked, let us listen for the sound of sandaled feet. Let us reach out for the Carpenter's hand. Then we shall come to know him. He may come to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside he came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same words, ". . . follow thou me. . ." (John 21:22), and sets us to the task which he has to fulfill for our

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First Day

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 which they shall pass through in his fellowship; and they shall learn in their own experience who he is.

We discover he is more than the babe in Bethlehem, more than the carpenter's son, more than the greatest teacher ever to live. We come to know him as the Son of God. He never fashioned a statue, painted a picture, wrote a poem, or led an army. He never wore a crown or held a scepter or threw around his shoulder a purple robe. His forgiveness was unbounded, his patience inexhaustible, his courage without limit. Jesus changed men. He changed their habits, their opinions, their ambitions. He changed their tempers, their dispositions, their natures. He changed men's hearts.

Changing men's lives

One thinks of the fisherman called Simon, better known to you and to me as Peter, chief among the apostles. Doubting, disbelieving, impetuous Peter was to remember the night that Jesus was led away to the high priest. Present were the priests whose greed and selfishness the Master had reproved, the elders whose hypocrisy he had branded, the scribes whose ignorance he had exposed. And then there were the Sadducees, considered the most cruel and dangerous opponents. This was the night that the throng "began to spit on [the Savior], and to cover his face, . . . to buffet him, . . . and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands." (Mark 14:65.)

Where was Peter, who had promised to die with him and never to deny him? The sacred record reveals, "And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest; and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire." (Mark 14:54.) This was the night that Peter, in fulfillment

of the Master's prophecy, indeed did deny him thrice. Amidst the pushing, the jeers, and the blows, the Lord, in the agony of his humiliation, in the majesty of his silence, turned and looked upon Peter.

As one chronologer described the change, "It was enough. Peter knew no more danger, he feared no more death. He rushed into the night to meet the morning dawn. This broken-hearted penitent stood before the tribunal of his own conscience, and there his old life, his old shame, his old weakness, his old self was doomed to that death of godly sorrow which was to issue in a new and a nobler birth." (Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, Portland, Oregon: Farrar Publications, 1964, p. 604.)

Saul of Tarsus

Then there was Saul of Tarsus, a scholar, familiar with the rabbinical writings in which certain modern scholars find such stores of treasure. For some reason, these writings did not reach Paul's need, and he kept on crying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24.) And then one day he met Jesus, and behold, all things became new. From that day to the day of his death, Paul urged men to "put off . . . the old man. . ." and to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:22, 24.)

Come forth

The passage of time has not altered the capacity of the Redeemer to change men's lives. As he said to the dead Lazarus, so he says to you and me: ". . . come forth." (John 11:43.) Come forth from the despair of doubt. Come forth from the sorrow of sin. Come forth from the death of disbelief. Come forth to a newness of life. Come forth.

As we do, and direct our footsteps

along the paths which Jesus walked, let us remember the testimony Jesus gave: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. . . . I am the light and . . . life of the world. . . ." (3 Ne. 11:10-11.) "I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father." (D&C 110:4.)

To his testimony I add my witness: He lives. His prophet this day has been sustained—even President Spencer W.

Kimball. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

We have just listened to Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

We will now be pleased to hear from President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency, who will be our concluding speaker.

President N. Eldon Tanner

First Counselor in the First Presidency

Just a year and a half ago in our solemn assembly, I was asked to present for the sustaining vote of the members a new president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a prophet, seer, and revelator—President Harold B. Lee—together with the other General Authorities and general Church officers.

President Lee was an outstanding, dynamic leader, loved and respected by all, and much was accomplished in the short time he presided over the Church. We were all shocked and saddened indeed at his passing. We realize, however, that the Lord has called him home to his great reward and to a different service. Following his passing, our beloved President Spencer W. Kimball was called, set apart, and ordained as prophet, seer, and revelator, and as president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Kimball chosen

I should like to bear my witness that President Kimball was chosen by the Lord and foreordained to preside over the Church at this particular time. Miracles have been performed in his

behalf in order to make it possible for him to be here in good health to receive this high honor and to assume the heavy responsibility placed upon him. He has been enthusiastically sustained by the stakes in their stake conferences and in the solemn assembly this morning. It is truly an honor, privilege, and blessing for me to be called as his counselor, and I do hope and pray that the Lord will give me the wisdom, judgment, inspiration, and ability, together with my determination, to serve under his direction in an acceptable manner to him and to the Lord in helping to build the kingdom of God here upon the earth.

I call upon all members of the Church everywhere to close ranks and to accept and support him as one called of God as a prophet, seer, and revelator, an apostle of Jesus Christ and president of His church and kingdom, and to assume their individual responsibilities in helping to further the cause of righteousness and in working out their own salvation and exaltation.

Receiving his word

Further, as the Lord said: