

Quorum of the Seventy, who is Supervisor of the Europe Area, will offer the invocation.

The Choir sang the hymn, "Rise Up, O Men of God."

The invocation was offered by Elder Theodore M. Burton.

President Spencer W. Kimball

The Choir will now favor us with, "Pilgrim's Song," after which we shall be pleased to hear from Elder LeGrand

Richards of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

"Pilgrim's Song" was rendered by the Choir.

President Kimball

Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve will be our first speaker this evening. He will be followed by Elder Dean L. Larsen of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder LeGrand Richards

It's a thrill, brethren, to stand here this evening and see this great audience of priesthood filling this sacred Tabernacle. Having had the privilege of serving as the Presiding Bishop of the Church for fourteen years, and thus, the president of the Aaronic Priesthood, I am thrilled to see all of the boys of the Aaronic Priesthood here tonight, and I imagine that will be true in the other buildings where the priesthood are listening in. We are all thrilled as we go through the Church to find the wonderful attitude that the Saints have toward President Kimball and, particularly, toward the emphasis that he is giving to missionary work. You know that he has indicated that every boy should be a missionary.

I think of when I was a young man, before I was even ordained a deacon, I went to one of our ward meetings in the little country town where I was raised, and two missionaries reported their missions down in the Southern States. In those days they traveled without purse or scrip, and they had to sleep out many nights when they couldn't get entertainment. I don't know whether they said anything unusual that night or not; but if they didn't, the Lord did some-

thing unusual for me, because when I left that meeting, I felt like I could have walked to any mission field in the world, if I just had a call. And I went home, went into my little bedroom, and got down on my knees, and asked the Lord to help me to live worthy so that when I was old enough I could go on a mission. And when the train finally left the station here in Salt Lake and I was headed for the little land of Holland, the last thing I said to my loved ones was, "This is the happiest day of my life."

Love for missionaries

Before I left on that mission, President Anthon H. Lund, who was then a counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, talked to us missionaries, and he said, among other things, "The people will love you. Now," he said, "don't get lifted up in the pride of your hearts and think that they love you because you are better than other people. They will love you because of what you bring to them." I did not understand that then, but before I left the little land of Holland, where I spent nearly three years, I knew what President Lund

meant. I went around saying good-bye to the Saints and the converts who I had brought into the Church, and I shed a thousand tears, as compared to what I shed when I told my loved ones good-bye.

For instance, in Amsterdam I went into a home where I had been the first missionary there, and the little mother, looking up into my face with tears rolling down her cheeks, said, "Brother Richards, it was hard to see my daughter leave for Zion a few months ago, but it's much harder to see you go." I had been the first missionary in that home. Then I thought I could understand what President Lund meant when he said, "They will love you."

I went to tell a man with a little Dutch beard good-bye. He stood erect in the uniform of his country. He got down on his knees and took my hand in his and hugged it and kissed it and bathed it with his tears. And then I thought I could understand what President Lund meant when he said, "They will love you."

Now I like a little story that President Grant used to tell about the love that converts have for their missionaries. He told about a couple who came here from one of the Scandinavian countries. They hadn't been taught much about the gospel. All they knew was that it was true. And so the bishop went to this couple and taught them the law of tithing. They paid their tithing. Then later the bishop went to them and taught them about the fast offering. They paid their fast offering. And then the bishop went to them again to get a donation to help build a ward meetinghouse. They thought that ought to come out of the tithing, but before the bishop got through with them, they paid their donation on the meetinghouse.

Then the bishop went to the father to get his son to go on a mission. Now I can hear President Grant standing here, saying, "That was the straw that broke the camel's back." The man said, "He's our only child. His mother will miss him. We can't let him go." Then the

bishop countered, "Brother So-and-So, who do you love in this world more than anyone else outside of your own relatives?" And he thought for a few minutes. He said, "I guess I love that young man who came up to the land of the midnight sun and taught me the gospel of Jesus Christ." Then the bishop countered, "Brother So-and-So, how would you like someone to love your boy just like that?" The man said, "Bishop, you win again; take him. I'll pay for his mission."

Now you fathers, how would you like someone to love your boys just like that man loved that boy who came up to the land of the midnight sun and taught him the gospel? I heard a missionary up in Oregon giving the report of his mission. He himself was a convert to the Church, and he came down with his fist on the pulpit, and he said, "I wouldn't take a check tonight for a million dollars for the experience of my mission." I sat back of him, and I said to myself, "Would you take a million dollars for your first mission in the little land of Holland?" And I began counting the families that I'd been instrumental in bringing into the Church. What kind of a man would I be if I were to sell them out of the Church for a million dollars? I wouldn't do that for all the money in the world!

Fruits of missionary labor

The other night I sat in my little study in my apartment and began reminiscing, and I counted ten families that I'd been instrumental in bringing into the Church, and I've lived long enough to see their sons go on missions. I checked with just one of those families here just a few years back when I had to give a talk at a Brigham Young University banquet for the Indians. At that time there were 153 direct descendants of that one family alone. Thirty-five of them had filled full-term missions, and four had done stake missionary work. If you gave them two years apiece, that would be seventy years of missionary

service out of that one family, without counting all the converts that their converts had made. And then one family kept two Indian children in their home—one boy they kept for eight years; he was then in the mission field, and they were paying for his mission. When my companion and I brought that family into the Church, we couldn't look ahead seventy years and see what would become of them.

I checked with another family that I'd been instrumental in bringing into the Church. They couldn't give me details, but they said that when their grandfather died, there were 150 direct descendants in the Church at that time, and five of them were serving as bishops.

I went over these ten families in my mind the other day, thinking of the words of Jesus when he said: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:19-21.)

Joy of serving a mission

What do you suppose I could have done during those few years of my young manhood that would lay away treasures in heaven like the years I spent over there among those Dutch people? Some of them have already passed on, and I love them almost like my own family. I look forward to being able to meet them again when my time comes to join that innumerable group.

Now I have labored so much with the missionaries. I have been on four missions, and presided over two, and I have toured many missions, and love to hear those young men bear their testimonies. For instance, another young man in Oregon in our testimony meeting said that there wasn't a company in this world that could pay him a large

enough salary to get him to leave his missionary work. And he had been in the armed forces and away from home for several years and then out into the mission field. I had a letter here just last week from a missionary from up in Idaho, and I copied a little paragraph from it. I'd like to read it to you. He said this:

"There is no greater work than that of missionary work. My mission has been the most rewarding undertaking in my entire twenty-seven years of life. My life is dedicated to serving the Lord. My heart is overflowing as are the tears of joy that are now coming from my eyes. There is nothing so wonderful—nothing—as tasting the joy and success of missionary labors."

I had a young missionary come in to visit with me as he returned from the Argentine. I knew his people back in Washington, and he had been kept over to help train some of the other missionaries, until he had been away from home for three years. And I said, "Craig, do you feel like it was a waste of time to be in the mission field, that you ought to have been home getting your education and getting ready to settle down?" He said, "Now listen, bishop, if the Brethren want to make me happy, just let them load me on the plane in the morning and let them send me back to the Argentine." You can't put that kind of feeling in the hearts of young people with money. The Lord who creates the feelings of the human breast is the only one who can put that kind of faith into the hearts of his people.

Brethren, after all the missionary service I have had, I wouldn't want to raise a boy and not have him go on a mission, for *his* good and because I think we owe it to the world to share with them the truths of the gospel. And one way to make sure that your boys will go on missions is to start a missionary fund for them and let them keep adding to it, and they will be on their missions from the time that they are young boys. For instance, down in California I went to a ward, and the

bishop has a program of giving to each boy when he's ordained a deacon fifteen dollars out of the missionary fund. Then they ask the father to match it, and then every time the boy is interviewed—for instance, when he's ordained a teacher—they check on his missionary fund. I figured, on a percentage basis, if every ward in the Church had as many missionaries in the field as that ward, we would have 55,500 missionaries. So I provided in my family that every male child who has not been on a mission has a missionary fund so he will know that he is on his mission from the time he is a boy.

God bless you all, and may we not

disappoint our great leader in sending all of our boys on missions, I pray, and I leave you my blessing, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder Dean L. Larsen of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

He will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Dean L. Larsen

I would like to speak to the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood about faith and courage and about making choices. I hope what I say will help you to face the special challenges you will be required to meet in your maturing years.

Decisions and consequences

Recently I met a young man who was receiving the missionary discussions. He had read the Book of Mormon and felt he had received answers to his prayers. He was now faced with the decision of whether or not to be baptized.

This was a rather remarkable young man. He had experienced some severe tests in his life, and he had demonstrated great courage and resourcefulness. The prospect of becoming a member of the Church, however, gave him a different kind of challenge.

As we talked about this newest and most important decision with which he was faced, he asked, "Why are so many people critical of Mormons?" He then

described some of the things he had experienced at the hands of friends, family, and fellow employees for having associated with the missionaries. "I'm not sure I can live with that kind of feeling against me if I join the Church," he said. "Why can't I believe what your church teaches, but just go on being a good Christian without becoming a Mormon?"

It isn't difficult for us to know what the consequences will be for this young man if he chooses not to be baptized because of the fear of incurring ill feelings from family and friends. He is, of course, perfectly free to make this choice, but he is *not* free to determine the consequences of that decision.

We may occasionally find ourselves in situations where we are tempted to set aside our identity as Latter-day Saints while we indulge in some thought or act that is unworthy of the trust the Lord has placed in us. We are regularly required to make choices on the basis of what we know to be right. We are free in most instances to make our own decisions, but we are never free