

Saturday, March 31

First Day

Choir singing, "Open the Gates of the Temple." Following the singing, Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church, will offer the invocation.

The combined men's choir sang the anthem, "Open the Gates of the Temple." Elder Eldred G. Smith offered the invocation.

President Spencer W. Kimball

The Choir will now favor us with, "Come, Come Ye Saints," after which we shall be pleased to hear from Elder

Thomas S. Monson, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

The hymn, "Come, Come Ye Saints" was rendered by the choir.

President Kimball

Elder Thomas S. Monson, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our first speaker this evening.

Elder Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will follow.

Elder Thomas S. Monson

Tonight I am aware that you, my brethren, represent the largest gathering of the priesthood ever to assemble. I pray for the help of our Heavenly Father, that he may grant me inspiration coupled with courage.

Some twenty-four years ago I was seated in the choir seats of the Assembly Hall situated to the south of us here on Temple Square. The setting was stake conference. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith and Elder Alma Sonne had been assigned to reorganize our stake presidency. The Aaronic Priesthood, including members of bishoprics, were providing the music for the conference. Those of us who served as bishops were singing along with our young men. As we concluded singing our first selection, Brother Smith stepped to the pulpit and announced the names of the new stake presidency. I am confident the other members of the presidency had been made aware of their callings, but I had not. After reading my name, Brother Smith announced, "If Brother Monson is willing to respond to this call we

shall be pleased to hear from him now." As I stood at the pulpit and gazed out on that sea of faces, I remembered the song we had just sung. Its title was "Have Courage, My Boy, to Say No." I selected as my acceptance theme "Have Courage, My Boy, to Say Yes." Such is the courage I seek this evening. age, My Boy, to Say Yes." Such is the courage I seek this evening.

A royal army

The words of a better-known hymn describe you:

*Behold! a royal army,
With banner, sword and shield,
Is marching forth to conquer,
On life's great battlefield;
Its ranks are filled with soldiers,
United, bold and strong,
Who follow their Commander,
And sing their joyful song:*

*Victory, victory,
Through him that redeemed us!
Victory, victory,*

Through Jesus Christ our Lord!
(Hymns, no. 7.)

The priesthood represents a mighty army of righteousness—even a royal army. We are led by a prophet of God. In supreme command is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our marching orders are clear. They are concise. Matthew describes our challenge in these words from the Master: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:19-20.) Did those early disciples listen to this divine command? Mark records, "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them" (Mark 16:20).

The command to go has not been rescinded. Rather, it has been reemphasized. Today twenty-eight thousand missionaries are serving in response to the call. Additional thousands will soon respond. Nine new missions will be created in July, bringing the total number of missions to 175. What a thrilling and challenging time in which to live!

You who hold the Aaronic Priesthood and honor it have been reserved for this special period in history. The harvest truly is great. Let there be no mistake about it; the opportunity of a lifetime is yours. The blessings of eternity await you. How might you best respond? May I suggest you cultivate three virtues, namely—

1. A desire to serve.
2. The patience to prepare.
3. A willingness to labor.

By so doing, you will ever be found part of that royal army of the Lord. Let us consider, individually, each of these three virtues.

Desire to serve

First, a desire to serve. Remember the qualifying statement of the Master, "Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind" (D&C 64:34). A latter-day minister advised: "Until willingness overflows obligation, men fight as conscripts rather than following the flag as patriots. Duty is never worthily performed until it is performed by one who would gladly do more if only he could."

Isn't it appropriate that you do not call yourselves to this work? Isn't it wise that your parents do not call you? Rather, you are called of God by prophecy and by revelation. Your call bears the signature of the President of the Church.

It was my privilege to serve for many years with President Spencer W. Kimball when he was chairman of the Missionary Executive Committee of the Church. Those never-to-be-forgotten missionary assignment meetings were filled with inspiration and occasionally interspersed with humor. Well do I remember the recommendation form for one prospective missionary on which the bishop had written: "This young man is very close to his mother. She wonders if he might be assigned to a mission close to home in California so that she can visit him on occasion and telephone him weekly." As I read aloud this comment, I awaited from President Kimball the pronouncement of a designated assignment. I noticed a twinkle in his eye and a sweet smile cross his lips as he said, without additional comment, "Assign him to the Johannesburg South Africa Mission."

Too numerous to mention are the many instances where a particular call proved providential. This I know—divine inspiration attends such sacred assignments. We, with you, acknowledge the truth stated so simply in the Doctrine and Cov-

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enants: "If ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work" (D&C 4:3).

Preparation

Second, the patience to prepare. Preparation for a mission is not a spur-of-the-moment matter. It began before you can remember. Every class in Primary, Sunday School, seminary—each priesthood assignment—had a larger application. Silently, almost imperceptibly, a life was molded, a career commenced, a man made. Said the poet:

*Who touches a boy by the Master's
plan
Is shaping the course of a future
man.*

What a challenge is the calling to be an adviser to a quorum of boys. Advisers, do you really think about your opportunity? Do you ponder? Do you pray? Do you prepare? Do you prepare your boys?

As a boy of fifteen I was called to preside over a quorum of teachers. Our adviser was interested in us, and we knew it. One day he said to me, "Tom, you enjoy raising pigeons, don't you?"

I responded with a warm "Yes."

Then he proffered, "How would you like me to give you a pair of purebred Birmingham Roller pigeons?"

This time I answered, "Yes, sir!" You see, the pigeons I had were just the common variety trapped on the roof of the Grant Elementary School.

He invited me to come to his home the next evening. The next day was one of the longest in my young life. I was awaiting my adviser's return from work an hour before he arrived. He took me to his loft, which was in a small barn at the rear of his yard. As I looked at the most

beautiful pigeons I had yet seen, he said, "Select any male, and I will give you a female which is different from any other pigeon in the world." I made my selection. He then placed in my hand a tiny hen. I asked what made her so different. He responded, "Look carefully, and you'll notice that she has but one eye." Sure enough, one eye was missing, a cat having done the damage. "Take them home to your loft," he counseled. "Keep them in for about ten days and then turn them out to see if they will remain at your place."

I followed his instructions. Upon releasing them, the male pigeon strutted about the roof of the loft, then returned inside to eat. But the one-eyed female was gone in an instant. I called Harold, my adviser, and asked: "Did that one-eyed pigeon return to your loft?"

"Come on over," said he, "and we'll have a look."

As we walked from his kitchen door to the loft, my adviser commented, "Tom, you are the president of the teachers quorum." This I already knew. Then he added, "What are you going to do to activate Bob?"

I answered, "I'll have him at quorum meeting this week."

Then he reached up to a special nest and handed to me the one-eyed pigeon. "Keep her in a few days and try again." This I did, and once more she disappeared. Again the experience, "Come on over and we'll see if she returned here." Came the comment as we walked to the loft, "Congratulations on getting Bob to priesthood meeting. Now what are you and Bob going to do to activate Bill?"

"We'll have him there this week," I volunteered.

This experience was repeated over and over again. I was a grown man before I fully realized that, indeed, Harold, my adviser, had given me a special pigeon; the only bird in

his loft he knew would return every time she was released. It was his inspired way of having an ideal personal priesthood interview with the teachers quorum president every two weeks. I owe a lot to that one-eyed pigeon. I owe more to that quorum adviser. He had the patience to help me prepare for opportunities which lay ahead.

Willingness to labor

Third, a willingness to labor. Missionary work is difficult. It will tax your energies. It will strain your capacity. It will demand your best effort—frequently, a second effort. Remember, the race goeth “not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong” (Eccl. 9:11)—but to him who endures to the end. Determine to—

*Stick to your task till it sticks to you.
Beginners are many, but enders are few.*

*Honor, power, place and praise
Will always come to the one who stays.*

*Stick to your task till it sticks to you;
Bend at it, sweat at it, smile at it,
too—*

*For out of the bend and the sweat
and the smile*

*Will come life's victories after
awhile.*

During the final phases of World War II, I turned eighteen and was ordained an elder—one week before I departed for active duty with the Navy. A member of my ward bishopric was at the train station to bid me farewell. Just before train time, he placed in my hand a book which I hold before you tonight. Its title, the *Missionary Handbook*. I laughed and commented, “I’m not going on a mission.” He answered, “Take it anyway. It may come in handy.”

It did. During basic training our

company commander instructed us concerning how we might best pack our clothing in a large sea bag. He advised, “If you have a hard, rectangular object you can place in the bottom of the bag, your clothes will stay more firm.” I suddenly remembered just the right rectangular object—the *Missionary Handbook*. Thus it served for twelve weeks.

The night preceding our Christmas leave our thoughts were, as always, on home. The barracks were quiet. Suddenly I became aware that my buddy in the adjoining bunk—a Mormon boy, Leland Merrill—was moaning with pain. I asked, “What’s the matter, Merrill?”

He replied, “I’m sick. I’m really sick.”

I advised him to go to the base dispensary, but he answered knowingly that such a course would prevent him from being home for Christmas.

The hours lengthened; his groans grew louder. Then, in desperation, he whispered, “Monson, Monson, aren’t you an elder?” I acknowledged this to be so; whereupon he asked, “Give me a blessing.”

I became very much aware that I had never given a blessing. I had never received such a blessing; I had never witnessed a blessing being given. My prayer to God was a plea for help. The answer came: “Look in the bottom of the sea bag.” Thus, at 2 A.M. I emptied on the deck the contents of the bag. I then took to the night-light that hard, rectangular object, the *Missionary Handbook*, and read how one blesses the sick. With about sixty curious sailors looking on, I proceeded with the blessing. Before I could stow my gear, Leland Merrill was sleeping like a child.

The next morning Merrill smilingly turned to me and said, “Monson, I’m glad you hold the priesthood.” His gladness was only

surpassed by my gratitude.

Future missionaries, may our Heavenly Father bless you with a desire to serve, the patience to prepare, and a willingness to labor, that you and all who comprise this royal army of the Lord may merit his promise: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up." (D&C 84:88.)

This is my earnest and sincere prayer. I ask it humbly and in the

name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Thomas S. Monson, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder Franklin D. Richards, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

He will be followed by President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

Elder Franklin D. Richards

My dear brethren, I rejoice with you in the wonderful spirit of this priesthood meeting.

I am grateful that my spirit was reserved to come to earth in the dispensation of the fulness of times, when the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored, and when we have a prophet of God, our beloved President Spencer W. Kimball, to counsel us.

Work

Each of us is entitled to immortality through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, but in order to enjoy eternal life, we must work out our own salvation day by day.

What a marvelous philosophy—the gospel of work—eternal progression!

President David O. McKay said, "Let us . . . realize that the *privilege* to work is a gift, that [the] *power* to work is a blessing, that *love* [of] work is success" (*True to the Faith*, comp. Llewelyn R. McKay, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, p. 287).

For the next few minutes I would like to direct my remarks particularly to my young friends of the

Aaronic Priesthood. You may not realize it, but when you are young you set the patterns that follow you throughout your entire life. It is so important that you set good patterns when you are young.

I am grateful that I had a father and mother who taught me as a boy the joy of work and the importance of paying my tithing and of spending less money than I made so that I could have something saved for my schooling and mission.

As a young boy, I raised chickens and sold eggs in the neighborhood, mowed lawns, worked in a warehouse and brickyard, and later sold printing. By working, I had my own money to spend, and I felt pretty grown-up. I paid my tithing, put some in a savings account for a mission and schooling, and the rest was mine to spend in any way I wanted to.

My parents taught me that tithing was a commandment of our Father in Heaven and a way for us to show our love for him and our appreciation for all the blessings he gives us. I still have a tithing receipt which was given to me when I was eight years old, and it is among my prized possessions.