

spirit of Jesus. The Holy Trinity is not a blur, but rather three separate and distinct personages. Heavenly Father gave to His Son those of His children who would take upon themselves the name of His Son, demonstrating faith in Him by repenting of their sins and entering the holy waters of baptism and then going forth steadfastly in His kingdom forever.

King Benjamin tells us:

“And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7).

I pray that the entire membership of this church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, will so live that if there are any who would accuse us falsely of not being Christians, their words would not be believed by any who know us. Let us so live that every person who has ever met a member of this Church would know that we all strive daily to be better friends of the Savior, more unselfish servants of the Sav-

ior, more like sons and daughters given by the Father to our Savior by virtue of our taking His name upon us in the holy waters of baptism.

To this I testify humbly and with love, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Master and Redeemer, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Wells.

The Choir and congregation will now join in singing “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.”

After the singing, Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will speak to us.

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President Hinckley

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will next address us. We shall then hear from Elder George P. Lee, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone

Personal feelings about parable

My beloved brothers and sisters, I would like to share my personal feelings about a parable of great hope and compassion. The Savior said, “A certain man had two sons” (Luke 15:11). The younger of the two sons seemed always to be in the shadow of his older, more mature brother. Compliments would come freely to the older brother. His age and size were in his favor; he could work harder. The younger son, always compared to his older

brother, never quite measured up. He tired more quickly, did not get all the work done, and probably had a fairly poor self-image. He may have determined that the “system” was against him. He was not being judged on his own merits. He decided to leave home and start in a new environment.

The parable continues: “And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me” (Luke 15:12). Apparently the father had previously discussed with his sons that one day

each would receive an inheritance. The inheritance would be a free-will gift from the father. It is doubtful that either son actually earned much more than his room and board. Nevertheless, the father "divided unto him his living" (Luke 15:12). This, in essence, was approval for the younger man to strike out on his own with his inheritance. The father loved him. He may have had an idea what the younger son would do with his share. The younger brother "gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country" (Luke 15:13).

He may have intended to do something honorable. However, he found, after arriving in the distant city in a far country, people did not just automatically gather round and make him welcome. He was in a predicament, no influence and no friends. True friends must be earned, others can be bought. The younger son found that flies are attracted by honey. He began to flash his inheritance around. The flies came. Not only did he not invest or use his money wisely, he wasted it on riotous living. (See Luke 15:13.) There were evil and drunken men and vile and adulterous women whose lust for his companionship was gone when the money was spent.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land" (Luke 15:14). Conditions were bad, for not only had he used up all his inheritance, but even the average citizen waxed sore. He had been taught to work at home and apparently attempted to find work. He may have gone to many who had been his friends when he was "flush."

Wells of despair

The prodigal began to be in want and "went and joined himself to a [certain] citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine" (Luke 15:15). Now he

was not only destitute, but also forced to take the most humble kind of work. In such great poverty was he that "he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him" (Luke 15:16). The Savior is undoubtedly showing us the contrast and the depths of poverty and need to which he had sunk. He had indulged with all who came when he had money. Now not even one of his supposed friends so much as gave him a husk of corn so that he might feed at least as well as the swine.

There is a great purging and humbling that comes from the wells of despair. False pride is stripped away. The light of home flickers dimly through the dark miles of distance.

In the despair of this great, humbling experience, the young man "came to himself, [and] he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and [I] will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father." (Luke 15:17-20.)

The son returns

It is possible that he rehearsed the speech over and over again. The father had been faithful and had worked hard all his life, a frugal man with character and integrity. Would he turn his son away? The younger son arose and came unto his father—undoubtedly a long journey.

Now, the older son may have noticed that since the younger brother's leaving, the father seemed always preoccupied. His father had little interest in the work. He would work a bit, then leave the field to

look down the road, each time returning with a faraway look in his eyes. Not only did the older brother have to do his own work and make up for the younger brother's absence, but he also had an additional work load which was previously done by the father. It also seemed that his father paid him little attention. Before the younger brother's leaving, there was always a word of praise for the way the older son worked. Now, there was little or no fun, no singing, no dancing, and precious little talk. Both the mother and father would sit at night and stare into the open fire. Days, weeks, even months passed thus.

The Master states: "But when [the younger son] was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." (Luke 15:20-22.) The long journey probably had been made with little or no footwear, so the robe and shoes were necessities. But the father also had a ring brought for his son's hand. This was an unexpected gift, an expression of the gratitude of the father for the son's return.

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again . . . was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Thy brother is found

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

"And he called one of the ser-

vants, and asked what these things meant.

"And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

"[Now the elder brother] was angry, and would not go in." (Luke 15:23-28.)

The weeks and months of doing work which his brother had previously done, compensating for his father's inattention, receiving no compliments, and the father's preoccupation settled in on him. Perhaps he thought he should have taken his inheritance also. He would not have wasted it, but increased it. In spite of these thoughts, he had stayed at home and been a dutiful son. There was no music, no dancing for his righteous life; and yet when his younger brother returned, all of these things celebrated his coming.

Word came to the father that his son was outside and would not come in, "therefore came his father out, and intreated him" (Luke 15:28). The father must have realized the oversight; he may even have apologized. The great concern for his younger son was off his mind. He remembered he had not been as complimentary to the older son as usual. He recalled the older son's more intense work to compensate—no dancing, no music, no sumptuous feasts. Hearts were too heavy for those things.

"And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

"But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf" (Luke 15:29-30).

The father, with full understanding, said, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine"

(Luke 15:31). The father had planned all along to reward the older brother by giving him everything, but this was the first time this had been mentioned.

The father said, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

Compassion and hope for all

A minister recently read the parable of the prodigal son over the radio. He concluded with: "The younger brother stood justified before the Lord due to his repentance, and the older brother fell under the greater condemnation." When I heard this, I wept and I thought, "Oh, you foolish man. You do not understand the Lord's teachings." The older son had been hurt and neglected and, true, had not exercised love and compassion to his wayward brother; but no thinking man could ever suppose that his transgression compared to the wasteful, extravagant, riotous living with harlots of the younger brother.

I think I have an understanding of what the Lord was trying to teach in this beautiful parable which extends hope to all. The Savior is standing with open arms to receive and forgive all who come unto him. His atoning and redemptive suffering in Gethsemane and on Golgotha's hill are the greatest acts of love ever performed.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox, in her poem entitled "Gethsemane," said:

All paths that have been, or should be
Pass somewhere through
Gethsemane.
All those who journey, soon or late,
Must pass within the garden's gate;
Must kneel alone in darkness there,

And battle with some fierce despair.

God pity those who cannot say:
"Not mine, but thine"; who only pray:

"Let this cup pass," and cannot see

The purpose in Gethsemane.

(James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1948, p. 184.)

Death, divorce, transgression, loneliness, and despair drive us to Gethsemane's garden. The Master's outstretched arms are open to receive all. The parable of the prodigal son is beautiful. It demonstrates charity. His love and compassion are eternally surrounding every soul who walks the earth. Every man, woman, or youth who returns home after a prodigal journey or an inactive period will find the Savior waiting with open arms. His atoning act will satisfy justice and extend mercy to all who will "come unto him." (See D&C 18:11.)

Come home

All who are active have someone close who may be inactive, indifferent, or clothed in transgression's soiled robes. They need the sweet, abiding love of a compassionate parent or loving brother or sister. Jesus will bless every member of the Church who will go out and bring someone back.

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said:

"Every human being is born with the light of faith kindled in his heart as on an altar, and that light burns and the Lord sees that it burns, during the period before we are accountable. When accountability comes then each of us determines how we shall feed and care for that light. If we shall live righteously that light will glow until it suffuses the whole body, giving to it health and

strength and spiritual light as well as bodily health. If we shall live unrighteously that light will dwindle and finally almost flicker out. Yet it is my hope and my belief that the Lord never permits the light of faith wholly to be extinguished in any human heart, however faint the light may glow. The Lord has provided that there shall still be there a spark which, with teaching, with the spirit of righteousness, with love, with tenderness, with example, with living the Gospel, shall brighten and glow again, however darkened the mind may have been. And if we shall fail so to reach those among us of our own whose faith has dwindled low, we shall fail in one of the main things which the Lord expects at our hands." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1936, p. 114.)

We are the keepers of the light. We invite all who are here to reach out and bless others who are not here. Listen to the voice of a prophet. President Spencer W. Kimball said: "We extend to every listener a cordial invitation to come to the watered garden, to the shade of pleasant trees, to unchangeable truth.

"Come with us to sureness, security, consistency. Here the cooling waters flow. The spring does not go dry.

"Come listen to a prophet's voice and hear the word of God." (In Conference Report, Apr. 1971, p. 11.)

And we invite all those who are not here to come home. We gaze steadily down the road, anxious for your return. We will run with open arms, and hearts filled with compassion. There are shoes for your feet, a robe, a ring for your hand, and a fattened calf. Come home and we will rejoice together, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder George P. Lee, also a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, following which the Tabernacle Choir will sing "For I Am Called by Thy Name."

Elder George P. Lee

Testimony of Christ as Redeemer

In our world of skepticism, confusion, and wickedness, to know the truth, to have a deep, humble, and solemn conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is a very precious thing. I have received the witness of the divinity of my Savior through the sweet influence and power of the Holy Ghost. I have received this witness in my own heart, which exceeds all other evidences. It bears record to me, to my very soul, of the existence of my Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

This silent, sweet conviction came early in my youth, while I was

on my knees in deep supplication in our humble hogan, and at other times, after reading the Book of Mormon while tending the sheep out in the hot desert on the reservation. Just as I know that my life did not begin when I was born, just as I know that it will not end when I die, likewise I know for certain that the life of Christ did not begin at Bethlehem; neither did it end on Calvary. Of himself, the Lord Jesus Christ said:

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work . . . thou gavest me to do.

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the