
The men's choir sang "Glory to God on High."

Elder G. Homer Durham offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now favor us with "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered." Elder Jack H. Goaslind, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will then address us.

Elder Jack H. Goaslind, Jr.

The Lord's "last lecture"

A few years ago, there was a popular series of firesides called the "Last Lecture" series. Well-known LDS scholars were asked to choose a topic which to them was so important that it could be the subject of the last discourse they were ever permitted to deliver. We received some very interesting insights from the choice of topics. It has occurred to me that our Lord, after his resurrection but before his ascension, gave such a "last lecture" to his disciples. His last lecture provides a profoundly significant insight. Of all the topics from the vaults of eternal wisdom that he could have treated, he said simply, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). And the disciples "went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20).

It is my prayer this evening that I might comment on the Lord's last lecture, teaching you priesthood holders according to the covenants and motivating you to respond as the Lord's disciples, with faith and unrelenting commitment. I especially hope that you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood will understand the importance of what I will say, because upon you will rest

The men's choir sang "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered."

President Hinckley

I think that great anthem was written by Robert Manookin; a tremendous composition apropos the priesthood and the gathering in which we are met.

Elder Jack H. Goaslind will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Brother James M. Dunn, recently released as president of the Colombia Bogotá Mission

the major responsibility of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

The salvation of souls

The life of God—the eternal, exalted life we all seek—is inherently concerned with the salvation of souls. It is the "work and . . . glory" of God to "bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). It is by bringing about the conditions necessary for the salvation of his children that God glorifies himself, progresses, and expands his dominions. (See D&C 132:31.)

Paul said that God "will have all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4). To our Father in Heaven, "the worth of souls is great" (D&C 18:10), and "the redemption of their soul is precious" (Psalm 49:8). Therefore, God sent his Son, the Savior and Redeemer, to loose the bands of death and atone for the sins of carnal, fallen men. The Lord suffered the pain of all men that all men might come unto him on condition of repentance. (See D&C 18:11–12.)

Our call to cry repentance to all people is a direct consequence of the infinite and eternal Atonement. (See D&C 18:10–14.) It is by teaching the gospel and administering the ordinances that the Atonement becomes effective in a person's life. As Paul said, "How shall they believe in him of

whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14).

Preach the gospel

Jesus Christ himself exemplified the manner in which we fulfill this call. He announced the purpose of his ministry by quoting Isaiah in his first public discourse, given in a Nazarene synagogue.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

The conditions of our discipleship impose on us the identical mission, for he said, "The works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do" (3 Nephi 27:21). We are empowered, as necessary, to do all that the Savior did—except for the Atonement itself—in our labors to save our fellowmen. In fact, we are told that we must be "the saviors of men" or we will be "as salt that has lost its savor" (D&C 103:10).

The Lord has not left the accomplishment of this sacred labor to chance. Through sacred covenants he imposes this responsibility on all members of his kingdom, and simultaneously empowers us to fulfill these covenants. Even young children and youth have this sacred duty and also the power to do it.

Elder John A. Widtsoe taught that in our premortal state "we agreed . . . to be not only saviors for ourselves but measurably, saviors for the whole human family. . . . The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father's work, and the Savior's work, but also our work" (*Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Oct. 1934, p. 189). We understood, as President George Albert Smith noted, that "we cannot receive the beneficent favor of our Heavenly

Father that is bestowed upon us, the knowledge of eternal life, and selfishly retain it, thinking that we may be blessed thereby. It is not what we receive that enriches our lives, it is what we give" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1935, p. 46). Therefore, "those who receive the message are obligated," said Elder Widtsoe, ". . . by the ageless agreement made before this world was organized . . . [to] do all in their power to bring it to the attention of others" (*Priesthood and Church Government*, rev. ed., comp. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954], pp. 318-19).

These solemn premortal promises are renewed and confirmed upon us in the ordinances of salvation. In baptism, for example, we covenant to "stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9). The promise is that the Lord will "pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you" (Mosiah 18:10). When partaking of the sacrament, we renew this covenant, recalling that Christ, when introducing this sacred ordinance, said, "Of me ye shall bear record unto all the world" (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:23). Again, the promise for faithfulness is that we "may always have his Spirit to be with" us (D&C 20:77).

Again, we are "endowed with power from on high" in holy places to enable us to "go forth among all nations" (D&C 38:32-33). At the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith prayed that God's servants "may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them, and thy glory be round about them, and thine angels have charge over them;

"And from this place they may bear exceedingly great and glorious tidings, in truth, unto the ends of the earth" (D&C 109:22-23).

By obeying the commandments and fulfilling these covenants, we are sanctified, purified, and born of the Spirit. We become vessels worthy of

receiving the Holy Spirit and the accompanying gifts of the Spirit that must attend this work if we are to succeed. The fulfilling of the commandments, as Moroni explained, "bringeth remission of sins;

"And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love" (Moroni 8:25-26).

God will hold us responsible

Love, then, is evidence of our own conversion and is manifest as concern for the salvation of others. Jacob said to the Nephites: "I am desirous for the welfare of your souls. Yea, mine anxiety is great for you" (2 Nephi 6:3). The sons of Mosiah "were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish" (Mosiah 28:3).

This love, or charity, is our greatest asset. John recognized that "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18), which fear and reluctance are the greatest obstacle to our experiencing the joy of missionary service. It is also by exercising that "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6) that we are able to draw upon spiritual power, because God "worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men" (Moroni 10:7).

As noted by Moroni, this perfect love comes as a direct result of having our sins remitted. It is imperative, therefore, "for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day" (Mosiah 4:26) that we administer to the needs and wants of our brothers and sisters, both temporally and spiritually.

We must realize that we have received a divine commission from God and we neglect it at the peril of our salvation. President Spencer W. Kimball said, "If we do not do our duty in regard to missionary service, then I am convinced that God will hold us

responsible for the people we might have saved had we done our duty" (*Ensign*, Oct. 1977, p. 5). This echoes Jacob's sobering doctrine: "We did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by laboring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments; otherwise their blood would come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day" (Jacob 1:19).

Working for the salvation of others

That is the warning. Our eternal welfare is at stake, as also is the eternal welfare of our nonmember brothers and sisters. Yet the promises for our diligence are glorious. We know that—

- Bringing souls unto the Lord is "the thing which will be of the most worth unto you" (D&C 16:6).
- By proclaiming the gospel "thou wilt do the greatest good unto thy fellow beings, and wilt promote the glory of him who is your Lord" (D&C 81:4).
- Those who seek to bring forth Zion "shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 13:37).
- Faithful servants will be "crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life" (D&C 75:5).
- "Great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:16).

Brethren, let me state it clearly and pointedly. Working for the salvation of others is essential for our own salvation. You cannot fully magnify your calling according to the oath and covenant of the priesthood unless you are actively engaged in this work of salvation, for the priesthood is conferred on you as an instrument of service.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie once said: "This call to missionary service does not leave us any choice or option as to the course we should pursue. It is not merely a permissive invitation

which allows us to spread the gospel message on a voluntary basis, or if we find it convenient to do so. The decree is mandatory. We have no choice about it, if we are to retain the favor of God" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1960, p. 54).

Obligation to serve a mission

Young men, do you understand why President Spencer W. Kimball said that "every young man should fill a mission"? (*Ensign*, Oct. 1974, p. 8). It is not an option; it is your obligation to serve. And do you mature couples understand that President Kimball has made it clear that you also have this responsibility? (See *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], p. 551.) He said, "The time is at hand to go" (*Go Ye into All the World*, text from a film produced by Brigham Young University Department of Motion Picture Production [Provo: Brigham Young University, 1974], p. 2). This service is as much for your benefit as it is for the benefit of the Church and the nonmembers who receive your message. We are grateful for the increasing numbers of young men and couples who are serving missions. We assure you that there is no more important thing you can do than prepare

for a mission by prayerfully studying the scriptures, keeping yourselves morally clean, and conducting your temporal and spiritual lives with the goal of a mission firmly in mind.

I have tried to teach you according to your covenants as members of the Church and as priesthood bearers. I urge you to prayerfully ask the Lord for a testimony of the covenant you have assumed to preach the gospel. Then, as you keep all the "covenants by which ye are bound," the Lord "will cause the heavens to shake for your good" (D&C 35:24).

I know that the responsibility and opportunity of missionary service is the most worthwhile thing we can do. The blessings must be experienced to be appreciated.

I conclude with the Prophet Joseph Smith's question: "Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause?" (D&C 128:22). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Elder Goaslind.

Brother James M. Dunn, former president of the Colombia Bogotá Mission, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

Brother James M. Dunn

My dear brethren, to repeat an expression that's popular among missionaries these days, this is an "awesome" experience. I pray that the calming influence of the Spirit will be with me, that I might express my thoughts to you.

First baptism

When I left on my first mission as a young man, I had practically no understanding of missionary work. I had

a feeble testimony of the gospel, but I had faith that what I was doing was right.

Upon arrival in Montevideo, Uruguay, I was assigned to Elder Wayne G. Scheiss, my first senior companion. I immediately found that he cared for me. In our brief three months together, he taught me all I was smart enough to learn of the missionary discussions. He taught me the rudiments of the Spanish language. And he taught me to put my feet on the proper path toward mission-