

The bishop reports that it was touching to see this family with their five children sealed for time and eternity. The sealing room in the temple was filled with friends and members of the ward.

The family now bears strong testimony to the truth of the gospel, and many in the ward say they have never seen people change so much. The husband now serves in the presidency of the elders quorum.

Reactivation in Brazil

The president of an elders quorum in one of our outstanding stakes in Brazil—I love that great people, our members in Brazil—reported phenomenal success in reactivating fifteen elders in his quorum last year. I asked the question, “How did you accomplish this?” He said, “We and the home teachers visited them often. These inactive elders knew that we really cared for them.” Their testimonies were strengthened. They and their families are now active members of the Church.

The gospel is everlasting

The Lord has promised great rewards for those who reach out to strengthen their brothers and sisters.

The Lord has said in modern revelation, “And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!” (D&C 18:15).

I wish I could engrave on every heart what I so keenly know and feel. I bear unwavering testimony that our Heavenly Father and His Divine Son, Jesus Christ, rule and reign, and that we must all understand that the gospel is everlasting. It is forever and applicable to all, and each of us is to be held accountable.

May the Lord bless us in this important work, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you Brother Wirthlin.

Elder Boyd K. Packer will now speak to us.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

I want to talk to my young friends of the Aaronic Priesthood. And I begin with a parable; and then I have a test for you.

A parable

Imagine that our bishop has appointed you and me to plan a picnic for all of the ward members. It is to be the finest social in the history of the ward, and we are to spare no expense.

We reserve a beautiful picnic ground in the country. We are to have it all to ourselves; no outsiders will interfere with us.

The arrangements go very well, and when the day comes, the weather is perfect. All is beautifully ready. The tables are in one long row. We even have tablecloths and china. You have never seen such a feast. The Relief Society and Young Women have outdone themselves. The tables are laden with every kind of delicious food: cantaloupes, watermelon, corn on the cob, fried chicken, hamburgers, cakes, pies—you get the picture?

We are seated, and the bishop calls upon the patriarch to bless the food. Every hungry youngster secretly hopes it will be a short prayer.

Then, just at that moment there is an interruption. A noisy old car jerks into the picnic grounds and sputters to a stop close to us. We are upset. Didn't they see the "reserved" signs?

A worried-looking man lifts the hood; a spout of steam comes out. One of our brethren, a mechanic, says, "That car isn't going anywhere until it is fixed."

Several children spill from the car. They are ragged and dirty and noisy. And then an anxious mother takes a box to that extra table nearby. It is meal-time. Their children are hungry. She puts a few leftovers on the table. Then she nervously moves them about, trying to make it look like a meal for her hungry brood. But there is not enough.

We wait impatiently for them to quiet down so that we can have the blessing and enjoy our feast.

Then one of their little girls spies our table. She pulls her runny-nosed little brother over to us and pushes her head between you and me. We cringe aside, because they are very dirty. Then the little girl says, "Ummm, look at that. Ummm, ummm, I wonder what that tastes like."

What would you do?

Everyone is waiting. Why did they arrive just at that moment? Such an inconvenient time. Why must we interrupt what we are doing to bother with outsiders? Why couldn't they have stopped somewhere else? They are not clean! They are not like us. They just don't fit in.

Since the bishop has put us in charge, he expects us to handle these intruders. What should we do? Of course, this is only a parable. But now for the test. If it really happened, my young friends, what would you do?

Three choices

I will give you three choices.

First, you could insist the intruders keep their children quiet while we have the blessing. Thereafter we

ignore them. After all, we reserved the place.

I doubt that you would do that. Could you choke down a feast before hungry children? Surely we are better than that! That is not the answer.

The next choice. There is that extra table. And we do have too much of some things. We could take a little of this and a little of that and lure the little children back to their own table. Then we could enjoy our feast without interruption. After all, we earned what we have. Did we not "obtain it by [our own] industry," as the Book of Mormon says? (See Alma 4:6.)

I hope you would not do that. There is a better answer. You already know what it is.

We should go out to them and invite them to come and join us. You could slide that way, and I could slide this way, and the little girl could sit between us. They could all fit in somewhere to share our feast. Afterward, we will fix their car and provide something for their journey.

Could there be more pure enjoyment than seeing how much we could get those hungry children to eat? Could there be more satisfaction than to interrupt our festivities to help our mechanic fix their car?

Is that what you would do? Surely it is what you *should* do. But forgive me if I have a little doubt; let me explain.

Feasting before the hungry

We, as members of the Church, have the *fullness* of the gospel. Every conceivable manner of spiritual nourishment is ours. Every part of the spiritual menu is included. It provides an unending supply of spiritual strength. Like the widow's cruse of oil, it is replenished as we use it and shall never fail. (See 1 Kings 17:8-16.)

And yet, there are people across the world and about us—our neighbors, our friends, some in our own families—who, spiritually speaking, are undernourished. Some of them are starving to death!

If we keep all this to ourselves, it is not unlike feasting before those who are hungry.

We are to go out to them, and to invite them to join us. We are to be missionaries.

It does not matter if it interrupts your schooling or delays your career or your marriage—or basketball. Unless you have a serious health problem, every Latter-day Saint young man should answer the call to serve a mission.

Even mistakes and transgressions must not stand in the way. You should make yourself *worthy* to receive a call.

The gospel is for everyone

The early Apostles at first did not know that the gospel was for everyone, for the Gentiles. Then Peter had a vision. He saw a vessel full of all kinds of creatures and was commanded to kill and to eat. But he refused, saying they were common and unclean. Then the voice said, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (see Acts 10:9–16). That vision, and the experience they had immediately following, convinced them of their duty; thus began the great missionary work of all Christianity.

Almost any returned missionary will have a question: "If they are starving spiritually, why do they not accept what we have? Why do they slam the door on us and turn us away?"

One of my sons was serving in Australia and was thrown off a porch by a man who rejected his message.

My son is big enough and strong enough that he had to be somewhat agreeable to what was happening or the man never could have done it.

All will not accept the gospel

Be patient if some will not eat when first invited. Remember, all who are spiritually hungry will not accept the gospel. Do you remember how reluctant you are to try any new food? Only after your mother urges you will

you take a little, tiny portion on the tip of a spoon to taste it to see if you like it first.

Undernourished children must be carefully fed; so it is with the spiritually underfed. Some are so weakened by mischief and sin that to begin with they reject the rich food we offer. They must be fed carefully and gently.

Some are so near spiritual death that they must be spoonfed on the broth of fellowship, or nourished carefully on activities and programs. As the scriptures say, they must have milk before meat. (See 1 Corinthians 3:2; D&C 19:22.) But we must take care lest the only nourishment they receive thereafter is that broth.

Work in Japan reopened

But feed them we must. We are commanded to preach the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. That message, my young friends, appears more than eighty times in the scriptures.

I did not serve a regular mission until we were called to preside in New England. When I was of missionary age, when I was your age, young men could not be called to the mission field. It was World War II, and I spent four years in the military. But I did do missionary work; we did share the gospel. It was my privilege to baptize one of the first two Japanese to join the Church after the mission had been closed twenty-two years earlier. Brother Elliot Richards baptized Tatsui Sato. I baptized his wife, Chio. And the work in Japan was reopened. We baptized them in a swimming pool amid the rubble of a university that had been destroyed by bombs.

Shortly thereafter I boarded a train in Osaka for Yokohama and a ship that would take me home. Brother and Sister Sato came to the station to say goodbye. Many tears were shed as we bade one another farewell.

Symbol of Japanese suffering

It was a very chilly night. The railroad station, what there was left of it, was very cold. Starving children were sleeping in the corners. That was a common sight in Japan in those days. The fortunate ones had a newspaper or a few old rags to fend off the cold.

On that train, I slept restlessly. The berths were too short anyway. In the bleak, chilly hours of the dawn, the train stopped at a station along the way. I heard a tapping on the window and raised the blind. There on the platform stood a little boy tapping on the window with a tin can. I knew he was an orphan and a beggar; the tin can was the symbol of their suffering. Sometimes they carried a spoon as well, as if to say, "I am hungry; feed me."

He might have been six or seven years old. His little body was thin with starvation. He had on a thin, ragged shirt-like kimono, nothing else. His head was shingled with scabs. His one jaw was swollen—perhaps from an abscessed tooth. Around his head he had tied a filthy rag with a knot on top of his head—a pathetic gesture of treatment.

When I saw him and he saw that I was awake, he waved his can. He was begging. In pity, I thought, "How can I help him?" Then I remembered. I had money, Japanese money. I quickly groped for my clothing and found some yen notes in my pocket. I tried to open the window. But it was stuck. I slipped on my trousers and hurried to the end of the car. He stood outside expectantly. As I pushed at the resistant door, the train pulled away from the station. Through the dirty windows I could see him, holding that rusty tin can, with the dirty rag around his swollen jaw.

A battle scar

There I stood, an officer from a conquering army, heading home to a

family and a future. There I stood, half-dressed, clutching some money which he had seen but which I could not get to him. I wanted to help him, but couldn't. The only comfort I draw is that I did want to help him.

That was thirty-eight years ago, but I can see him as clearly as if it were yesterday.

Perhaps I was scarred by that experience. If so, it is a battle scar, a worthy one, for which I bear no shame. It reminds me of my duty!

Warriors of the Restoration

Young brethren, I can hear the voice of the Lord saying to each of us just as He said to Peter, "Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep" (see John 21:15-17).

I have unbounded confidence and faith in you, our young brethren. You are the warriors of the Restoration. And in this spiritual battle, you are to relieve the spiritual hunger and feed the sheep. It is your duty!

We have the fullness of the everlasting gospel. We have the obligation to share it with those who do not have it. God grant that we will honor that commission from the Lord and prepare ourselves and answer the call, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Boyd K. Packer has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "High on the Mountain Top," following which President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."
