

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"I love them"

My brethren and sisters, President Benson said, with a slip of the tongue, that we would hear from President Kimball. I wish with all my heart that we might do so. I wish that he were standing here addressing us as the prophet of the Lord.

As you know, he is now in his ninetieth year. His life has been rich and fruitful, and we have been the beneficiaries of his great and dedicated leadership.

I said to him, a little bit ago, as we looked over this vast congregation, "President, these people all love you."

He said, "I love them." I hope that you will accept that as his address to you this afternoon as we come to the conclusion of this great general conference. "I love them."

A remarkable conference

We have enjoyed a conference that has been remarkable, I think, in a number of ways. The naming of two men to the Council of the Twelve on one occasion is something that has not happened in a long while. The last time it happened was forty years ago, when President Kimball and President Benson were so named.

We have added to the First Quorum of the Seventy a group of tried and tested men of faith and leadership who will greatly assist the work. I wish that we might have heard from each of them. We have announced the construction of five new temples. That will make a total of twenty-five new temples either recently completed or in course of construction. There has been nothing like it ever before in the history of the Church or of the world.

While President Kimball is unable to stand at this pulpit and speak to us, we are on occasion able to converse with him, and he has given his authori-

zation to that which has been done. We would not have proceeded without this.

Great things grow from small acts

Now we are ready to return to our homes. We have been counseled by the Brethren and have been strengthened in our faith. As we are about to separate, I should like to emphasize the importance of watching the little things in our lives. Have you ever noticed a large gate in a farm fence? As you open it or close it there appears to be very little movement at the hinge. But there is great movement at the perimeter.

Speaking to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1831, the Lord said: "Out of small things proceedeth that which is great" (D&C 64:33). It is so with good or evil, my brothers and sisters. Small, kind acts can grow into mammoth good institutions. The Boy Scout movement is an example of this as is known by anyone acquainted with the history of this great institution. It is so likewise with evil things. Small acts of dishonesty, small acts of an immoral nature, small outbursts of anger can grow into great and terrible things.

Drama of great tragedy

There stood once on the grounds right here, before ever this building was constructed, a bowery—a rather crude structure in which the Saints met in those days of their poverty. In September of 1857, there was presented in that old bowery on a Sunday afternoon, what was really the concluding act of a drama of great tragedy.

On that Sunday Brigham Young was conducting a meeting and introduced to the congregation a man who appeared to be old and infirm and weary of life.

Said President Brigham Young to the congregation:

"Brother Thomas B. Marsh, formerly the President of the Quorum of

the Twelve Apostles, has now come to us, after an absence of nearly nineteen years. He is on the stand to-day, and wishes to make a few remarks to the congregation. . . .

"He came into my office and wished to know whether I could be reconciled to him, and whether there could be a reconciliation between himself and the Church of the living God. He reflected for a moment and said, I am reconciled to the Church, but I want to know whether the Church can be reconciled to me.

"He is here," said President Young, "and I want him to say what he may wish to. . . . Brethren and sisters, I now introduce to you Brother Thomas B. Marsh. When the Quorum of the Twelve was first organized, he was appointed to be their President."

Brother Marsh rose to the pulpit. This man, who was named the first President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and to whom the Lord had spoken in so marvelous a manner, as recorded in section 112 of the Doctrine and Covenants—which I wish you would read—said to the people:

"I do not know that I can make all this vast congregation hear and understand me. My voice never was very strong, but it has been very much weakened of late years by the afflicting rod of Jehovah. He loved me too much to let me go without whipping. I have seen the hand of the Lord in the chastisement which I have received. I have seen and known that it has proved he loved me; for if he had not cared anything about me, he would not have taken me by the arm and given me such a shaking.

"If there are any among this people who should ever apostatize and do as I have done, prepare your backs for a good whipping, if you are such as the Lord loves. But if you will take my advice, you will stand by the authorities; but if you go away and the Lord loves you as much as he did me, he will whip you back again.

"Many have said to me," he continued, "How is it that a man like you, who understood so much of the revela-

tions of God as recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, should fall away? I told them not to feel too secure, but to take heed lest they also should fall; for I had no scruples in my mind as to the possibility of men falling away."

He continued, "I can say, in reference to the Quorum of the Twelve, to which I belonged, that I did not consider myself a whit behind any of them, and I suppose that others had the same opinion; but, let no one feel too secure; for, before you think of it, your steps will slide. You will not then think nor feel for a moment as you did before you lost the Spirit of Christ; for when men apostatize, they are left to grovel in the dark" (*Journal of Discourses*, 5:206).

Speaking in a voice that was difficult to hear, and appearing as an old man when he was actually only fifty-seven years of age, he spoke of the travails through which he had passed before he had finally made his way to the valley of the Great Salt Lake and asked that he might be baptized again into the Church.

I wondered, as I read that story so filled with pathos, what had brought him to this sorry state. I discovered it, in the *Journal of Discourses*, in a talk given to the Saints in this same bowery the year before by George A. Smith. I think, if you'll bear with me for a minute or two, it is worth the telling to illustrate to all of us the need to be careful in dealing with small matters which can lead to great consequences.

According to the account given by George A. Smith, while the Saints were in Far West, Missouri, "the wife of Thomas B. Marsh, who was then President of the Twelve Apostles, and Sister Harris concluded they would exchange milk, in order to make a little larger cheese than they otherwise could. To be sure to have justice done, it was agreed that they should not save the strippings [to themselves], but that the milk and strippings should all go together. . . ."

Now for you who have never been around a cow, I should say that the

strippings came at the end of the milking and were richer in cream.

"Mrs. Harris, it appeared, was faithful to the agreement and carried to Mrs. Marsh the milk and strippings, but Mrs. Marsh, wishing to make some extra good cheese, saved a pint of strippings from each cow and sent Mrs. Harris the milk without the strippings."

A quarrel arose, and the matter was referred to the home teachers. They found Mrs. Marsh guilty of failure to keep her agreement. She and her husband were upset and, "an appeal was taken from the teacher to the bishop, and a regular Church trial was had. President Marsh did not consider that the bishop had done him and his lady justice for they [that is, the bishop's court] decided that the strippings were wrongfully saved, and that the woman had violated her covenant.

"Marsh immediately took an appeal to the High Council, who investigated the question with much patience, and," says George A. Smith, "I assure you they were a grave body. Marsh being extremely anxious to maintain the character of his wife, . . . made a desperate defence, but the High Council finally confirmed the bishop's decision.

"Marsh, not being satisfied, took an appeal to the First Presidency of the Church, and Joseph and his Counselors had to sit upon the case, and they approved the decision of the High Council.

"This little affair," Brother Smith continues, ". . . kicked up a considerable breeze, and Thomas B. Marsh then declared that he would sustain the character of his wife, even if he had to go to hell for it.

"The then President of the Twelve Apostles, the man who should have been the first to do justice and cause reparation to be made for wrong, committed by any member of his family, took that position, and what next? He went before a magistrate and swore that the 'Mormons' were hostile towards the state of Missouri.

"That affidavit brought from the government of Missouri an exterminating order, which drove some 15,000 Saints from their homes and habitations, and some thousands perished through suffering the exposure consequent on this state of affairs" (*Journal of Discourses*, 3:283-84). Such is George A. Smith's account.

What a very small and trivial thing—a little cream over which two women quarreled. But it led to, or at least was a factor in, Governor Boggs' cruel exterminating order which drove the Saints from the state of Missouri, with all of the terrible suffering and consequent death that followed. The man who should have settled this little quarrel, but who, rather, pursued it, troubling the officers of the Church, right up to the Presidency, literally went through hell for it. He lost his standing in the Church. He lost his testimony of the gospel. For nineteen years he walked in poverty and darkness and bitterness, experiencing illness, and loneliness. He grew old before his time. Finally, like the prodigal son in the parable of the Savior (see Luke 15:11-32), he recognized his foolishness and painfully made his way to this valley, and asked Brigham Young to forgive him and permit his rebaptism into the Church. He had been the first President of the Council of the Twelve, loved, respected, and honored in the days of Kirtland, and the early days of Far West. Now he asked only that he might be ordained a deacon and become a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord.

Admonition to live gospel

We have all seen cases somewhat similar in our own time. I mention the matter only as a reminder to each of us that as we leave this great and inspirational conference we go with resolution in our hearts to live the gospel, to be faithful and true, to have the strength to look above small things that could lead to argument and trouble, to be forgiv-

ing one to another, to "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

It is so easy to stumble. It is sometimes so hard to keep our voices low when small things provoke us.

Let us rather remember always that we are sons and daughters of God, children born with a divine birthright, partakers of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, the beneficiaries of the priesthood restored by the Almighty for the blessing of his sons and daughters. Let us, my brethren and sisters, walk with integrity and honesty in all of our dealings one with another. Let us subdue any arrogance or pride and walk humbly before God, and with apprecia-

tion and respect for all with whom we associate.

May the blessings of the Lord attend you, beloved associates. May the peace of the Lord be in your homes and love for him reside in your hearts. God be with you, till we meet again, I humbly pray as I give you my testimony of the truth and divinity of this work, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Choir sang "Come, Follow Me."

Elder F. Burton Howard offered the benediction.

SALT LAKE TABERNACLE CHOIR AND ORGAN BROADCAST

The following broadcast, announced by J. Spencer Kinard and originating with KSL Radio and Television, Salt Lake City, Utah, was presented from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, April 8, 1984, through the courtesy of the Columbia Broadcasting System's network throughout the United States, parts of Canada, and through other facilities to several points overseas:

Announcer: Once more we welcome you within these walls with Music and the Spoken Word from the crossroads of the West.

CBS and its affiliated stations bring you at this hour the Mormon Tabernacle Choir from Temple Square in Salt Lake City, with Jerold Ottley conducting the Choir, John Longhurst, Tabernacle organist, and the Spoken Word given by Spencer Kinard.

Today's broadcast opens with Robert Manookin's festival anthem for organ, choir, and congregation based on Psalm 149:

"Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song. . . .

Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: . . . let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. . . .

Let them praise his name. . . ."
(Choir: "Psalm 149"—Manookin)

Announcer: With Robert Cundick now joining John Longhurst to provide four-hand organ accompaniment, the remainder of today's broadcast is devoted with narration to excerpts from Felix Mendelssohn's oratorio *Elijah*.

The story revolves around one of the great miracles of the Old Testament, as the people of Israel try to decide which God to worship—Baal, the Sun-god or the Lord God Jehovah. We first hear the people crying for help to end a terrible drought and famine.

(Choir: "Help, Lord"—Mendelssohn)

Announcer: And it came to pass that during the time of famine, the prophet Elijah stood before King Ahab, and Ahab accused Elijah, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"

And Elijah answered, "I have not troubled Israel; it is thou Ahab and thy