

"Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!" (see *Hymns*, 1985, no. 27). We are Joseph's spiritual heirs, called ages and ages ago—in the "there and then"—for the duties which await us "here and now!"

Duties as doers and messengers

Men and young men of the priesthood, let us be about those duties as doers and messengers. The gospel message is worthy of work like that performed by Ether, "from the morning, even until the going down of the sun" (Ether 12:3).

This work is worthy of sacrifice and courage like that of Abinadi. He suffered death by fire, saying that after "I finish my message," then "it matters not" (Mosiah 13:9).

Doctrinal illiteracy

Doers, said Jesus, will know that these doctrines are of God. (See John 7:17.) Therefore, do not be surprised when nondoers scoff. Do not be surprised, either, if these doctrines un-

settle some. Such was the case when the ancient Apostles filled Jerusalem with their doctrines. (See Acts 5:28.) And when Jesus focused His hearers on doctrines, "they were astonished at his doctrine" (Matthew 22:33). The only cure for the doctrinal illiteracy of those who murmur will be to learn doctrine. (See Isaiah 29:24.)

Given the grandness of the Restoration, "My heart is brim with joy" (Alma 26:11). I apologize for my inability to speak of Jesus as He deserves, being able to speak only "the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26:16). Yet, even so, "There is music in my soul today, a carol to my King, and Jesus listening can hear, the songs I cannot sing" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 227).

In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us. President Benson has indicated that I should be your next speaker.

President Thomas S. Monson

"Be one"

Whenever I have the privilege to attend this, the general priesthood meeting of the Church, I reflect on the teachings of some of the most noble of God's leaders who have stood at this pulpit and who, from the brilliance of their minds, from the depths of their souls, and from the warmth of their hearts, have given us direction. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., was such a man. Time and again, his fervent plea was for the priesthood of God to be united. Citing the teachings of Jesus, he inevitably admonished us, "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27).

A treasured truth! A profound philosophy!

It was my great privilege to know President Clark rather well. I was his printer. On occasion, he would share with me some of his most intimate thoughts, even those scriptures around which he tailored his teachings and lived his life. Late one evening I delivered some press proofs to his office situated in his home at 80 D Street here in Salt Lake City. President Clark was reading from Ecclesiastes. He was in a quiet and reflective mood. He sat back from his large desk, which was stacked with books and papers. He held the scriptures in his hand, lifted his eyes

from the printed page, and read aloud to me: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). He exclaimed, "A treasured truth! A profound philosophy!" Through the years that conversation has remained bright in my memory. I love, I cherish the noble word *duty*.

The legendary General Robert E. Lee of American Civil War fame declared, "Duty is the sublimest word in our language. . . . You cannot do more. You should never wish to do less."

From that same hour of history, as Abraham Lincoln left the people of Springfield to take over the nation's presidency, he said, "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it" (address, Cooper Union, New York, 27 Feb. 1860).

The call of duty

Time marches on. Duty keeps cadence with that march. Duty does not dim nor diminish. Catastrophic conflicts come and go, but the war waged for the souls of men continues without abatement. Like a clarion call comes the word of the Lord to you, to me, and to priesthood holders everywhere: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence" (D&C 107:99).

The call of duty came to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to Samuel, to David. It came to the Prophet Joseph Smith and to each of his successors, even to President Ezra Taft Benson. The call of duty came to the boy Nephi. Listen to his words:

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, returned from speaking with the Lord, to the tent of my father.

"And it came to pass that he spake unto me, saying: Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.

"For behold, Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of thy forefathers, and they are engraven upon plates of brass.

"Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brothers should go unto the house of Laban, and seek the records, and bring them down hither into the wilderness.

"And now, behold thy brothers murmur, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord.

"Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of the Lord, because thou has not murmured.

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:1-7).

Magnify your calling

When that same call comes to you and to me, what will be our response? Will we murmur, as did Laman and Lemuel, and say, "This is a hard thing required of us"? Or will we, with Nephi, individually declare, "I will go. I will do"?

Oftimes the wisdom of God appears as foolishness to men, but the greatest single lesson we can learn in mortality is that, when God speaks and a man obeys, man will always be right.

President John Taylor cautioned us, "If you do not magnify your calling, God will hold you responsible for those you might have saved, had you done your duty."

The call of duty came to John E. Page when the Prophet Joseph Smith extended to him a call to serve as a missionary. John E. Page "murmured" and responded, "Brother Joseph, I can't go on a mission to Canada. I don't even have a coat to wear."

The Prophet Joseph removed his own coat, handed it to Brother Page, and said, "Here, take this and the Lord will bless you." John E. Page went on that mission to Canada and, during a two-year period, walked five thousand miles and baptized six hundred people. (See Andrew Jenson, "John E. Page," *The Historical Record*, 5:57.)

A famed minister observed, "Men will work hard for money. Men will work harder for other men. But men will work hardest of all when they are dedicated to a cause. 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."

I slept and dreamt
That life was joy.
I awoke and saw
That life was duty.
I acted, and behold—
Duty was joy.
(Rabindranath Tagore)

Robert Louis Stevenson reminded us: "I know what pleasure is, for I have done good work."

The call of duty can come quietly as we who hold the priesthood respond to the assignments we receive. President George Albert Smith, that modest yet effective leader, declared, "It is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of your holy priesthood to so magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows that the people will be glad to follow you" (*Church News*, 7 Sept. 1968, p. 15).

What does it mean to magnify a calling? It means to build it up in dignity and importance, to make it honorable and commendable in the eyes of all men, to enlarge and strengthen it, to let the light of heaven shine through it to the view of other men. And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it. An elder magnifies the ordained calling

of an elder by learning what his duties as an elder are and then by doing them. As with an elder, so with a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, and each who holds office in the priesthood.

Duty as a bishop

In 1950 the call of duty came to me as a bishop. The responsibilities were many and varied. The Doctrine and Covenants provided a sure guide. The words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy pertaining to the office of a bishop were sobering. The *General Handbook* was helpful. The principal areas of administration were spelled out by leaders, both stake and general: The bishop (1) is the father of the ward; (2) is the president of the Aaronic Priesthood; (3) provides for the poor, the needy; (4) is responsible for keeping proper records; and (5) is the common judge in Israel.

Then came an unusual assignment from Church headquarters. Bishops were to provide each serviceman a subscription to the *Church News* and the *Improvement Era* and were to write a personal letter to every serviceman each month. The Korean War was raging. Our ward had twenty-three members in uniform. The priesthood quorums, with effort, supplied the funds for the subscriptions to the publications. Since I had served in the Navy in World War II, I knew the importance of a letter from home. I began the task, even the duty, to write twenty-three personal letters each month. After all these years, I still have copies of many of my letters and the responses received. Tears come easily when these letters are reread. It is a joy to learn again of a soldier's pledge to live the gospel, a sailor's decision to keep faith with his family.

"Leave unto the Lord the rest"

One evening I handed to a lady in the ward the stack of twenty-three letters for the current month. Her assignment was to handle the mailing and to

maintain the constantly changing address file. She glanced at one envelope and, with a smile, asked, "Bishop, don't you ever get discouraged? Here is another letter to Brother Bryson. This is the seventeenth letter you have sent to him without a reply."

I responded, "Well, maybe this will be the month." And it was. His reply is a keepsake, a literal treasure. It was postmarked "APO San Francisco." He was serving far away on a distant shore, isolated, homesick, alone. He wrote: "Dear Bishop, I ain't much at writin' letters. [I could have told him that seventeen months earlier.] Thank you for the *Church News* and magazines, but most of all thank you for the personal letters. I have turned over a new leaf. I have been ordained a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood. My heart is full. I am a happy man."

My brethren, Brother Bryson was no happier than was his bishop. I had learned the practical application of the adage, "Do your duty; that is best. Leave unto the Lord the rest."

Years later, while attending the Salt Lake Cottonwood Stake when Elder James E. Faust served as president, I related that account in an effort to encourage attention to our servicemen. After the meeting, a fine-looking young man came forward. He took my hand in his and asked, "Bishop Monson, do you remember me?"

I replied, "Brother Bryson! How are you? What are you doing in the Church?"

With warmth and obvious pride, he responded, "I'm fine. I serve in the presidency of my elders quorum. Thank you again for your concern for me and the personal letters which you sent and which I treasure."

Father, where shall I work today?
And my love flowed warm and free.

Then He pointed out a tiny spot
And said, "Tend that for me."

I answered quickly, "Oh no; not that!

Why, no one would ever see,
No matter how well my work was done;

Not that little place for me."
And the word He spoke, it was not stern;

He answered me tenderly:
"Ah, little one, search that heart of thine.

Art thou working for them or for me?

Nazareth was a little place,
And so was Galilee."

(Meade McGuire.)

To those who obey Him

Brethren, let us learn our duty. Let us, in the performance of our duty, follow in the footsteps of the Master. As you and I walk the pathway Jesus walked, let us listen for the sound of sandaled feet. Let us reach out for the Carpenter's hand. Then we shall come to know Him. He may come to us as one unknown, without a name, as by the lakeside He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words, "Follow thou me" (John 21:22), and sets us to the task which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands, and to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings that they shall pass through in His fellowship; and they shall learn by their own experience who He is.

We will discover He is more than the Babe in Bethlehem, more than the carpenter's son, more than the greatest teacher ever to live. We will come to know Him as the Son of God, our Savior and our Redeemer. When to Him came the call of duty, He answered, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). May we do likewise I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.