

President Monson

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel," following which President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will speak to us.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke without further announcement.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

I have a duty to speak to you. Beyond that, it is a great privilege and a tremendous opportunity, and I seek the direction of the Holy Spirit.

The question of a mission

I have been so appreciative of this returned missionary chorus who has sung to us this night. I have heard them and their kind sing all across this world. I wish that there were time for them to sing to us "Ye elders of Israel, come join now with me" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 319). They could do it in English, American English, Australian English, New Zealand English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, and other languages. Thank you, brethren, for the music with which you have blessed us.

What Brother Monson said and the presence of this chorus have set a theme for me.

I spoke with a young man the other evening who is deeply troubled over the question of whether he should go on a mission. He outlined a program of education which would be tremendously challenging. He spoke of his love for a beautiful girl and of the feeling that he could not leave her. He spoke of financial problems which would entail sacrifice.

Personal missionary experience

I told him that I could understand his feelings. I told him his concerns were similar to those of many others, including some I had experienced in my

own life. At his age, I was in the university. It was the time of the worst economic depression in the history of the world. Unemployment in this area was about 35 percent, and most of the unemployed were husbands and fathers, since relatively few women worked in the labor force. Very few missionaries were going into the field at that time. We send out as many in a week now as then went during the entire year. I received my bachelor's degree and planned on somehow attending graduate school. Then the bishop came with what seemed to me a shocking suggestion. He spoke of a mission. I was called to go to England which, at that time, was the most expensive mission in the world. The cost per month was the equivalent of what would be about \$500 now.

We discovered that my mother, who had passed away, had established a small savings account to be available for this purpose. I had a savings account in a different place, but the bank in which I had mine had failed. There was then no government insurance program to cover its failure as there is now. My father, a man of great faith and love, supplied the necessary means, with all of the family cooperating at a sacrifice. As I look back upon it, I see all of it as a miracle. Somehow the money was there every month.

The work in the field was not easy. It was difficult and discouraging. But what a wonderful experience it was. In retrospect, I recognize that I was probably a selfish young man when I arrived in Britain. What a blessing it became to set aside my own selfish interests to the

greater interests of the work of the Lord. I had the association of tremendous young men and women. They have become treasured friends whom I have known and loved now for more than half a century.

The girl I left came to mean more to me while I was away. Next spring, we shall commemorate our fiftieth wedding anniversary.

An instrument in the Lord's hands

How profoundly grateful I am for the experience of that mission. I touched the lives of a few who have, over the years, expressed appreciation. That has been important. But I have never been greatly concerned over the number of baptisms that I had or that other missionaries had. My satisfaction has come from the assurance that I did what the Lord wanted me to do and that I was an instrument in His hands for the accomplishment of His purposes. In the course of that experience, there became riveted into my very being a conviction and knowledge that this is in very deed the true and living work of God, restored through a prophet for the blessing of all who will accept it and live its principles.

Count your blessings

There may be a few young men in this vast audience tonight who may be wondering, ever so seriously, whether they should go on missions. There may be a scarcity of money. There may be compelling plans for education. There may be that wonderful girl you love and feel you cannot leave. You say to yourself, "The choice is mine."

That is true. But before you make a decision against a mission, count your blessings, my dear friend. Think of all the great and marvelous things you have—your very life, your health, your parents, your home, the girl you love. Are they not all gifts from a generous Heavenly Father? Did you really earn them alone, independent of His blessing? No, the lives of all of us are in His

hands. All of the precious things that are ours come from Him who is the giver of every good gift.

The greatest investment

I am not suggesting that He will withdraw His blessings and leave you bereft if you do not go on a mission. But I am saying that out of a spirit of appreciation and gratitude, and a sense of duty, you ought to make whatever adjustment is necessary to give a little of your time—as little as two years—consecrating your strength, your means, your talents to the work of sharing with others the gospel, which is the source of so much of the good that you have.

I promise that if you will do so, you will come to know that what appears today to be a sacrifice will prove instead to be the greatest investment that you will ever make.

Let there be no hesitancy in your decision. Live worthy of a call, and respond without hesitation when that call comes. Go forth with a spirit of dedication, placing yourself in the hands of the Lord to do His great work.

The Church, the Lord, and the world need you

To you younger boys, may I encourage you to save money now for a future mission. Put it in a place where it is safe, not in a speculative account where it may be endangered. Consecrate it for this great purpose, and let it not be used for any other. Prepare yourselves. Attend seminary and institute. Prayerfully read the Book of Mormon.

I hear much these days of costly youth excursions to exotic places during spring breaks and at other times. Why not stay near home and put the money in your future missionary accounts? Someday you will be grateful you did.

The Church needs you. The Lord needs you. The world needs you—yes, ten thousand more of you. There are many out there who need exactly what

you have to offer. They are not easy to find, but they will not be found unless there are those who are prepared and willing to seek them out. God bless you each one, every one of you, that a mission may be a planned and essential part of the program of your lives.

Now, I wish to say a word to all who are here. It is simply a reminder of the obligation, the duty, each has to share with others the precious gospel of Jesus Christ.

I was going to tell you the story of a friend who recently joined the Church. Rather than do that, I am going to ask him to tell it himself.

May I introduce Brother William Sheffield, who was baptized last November. Brother Sheffield, come and tell us of your experience.

William R. Sheffield

My dear brothers, following law school at Berkeley, I developed a successful private practice, particularly with international clients, including Indira Gandhi, former prime minister of India.

For years as a lawyer I had sought a judicial appointment. The day the governor of California called to say I had been appointed to the Superior Court was exhilarating and filled with visions of perhaps, someday, even the Supreme Court. But then, after less than two years as a judge and after just purchasing a new home, we decided to leave this nearly idyllic life. I had heard the Lord call me to the seminary. In response, my wife and I agreed that from then on we would always trust in the Lord, agreeing to be as leaves in a stream—two leaves in His stream, obeying His call, wanting more than anything else to follow Him.

From judgeship to divinity school

But I had not always followed Christ. For many years, I was uncertain who He was or how I could get close to

Him. Almost daily I silently asked myself: Is there a purpose to life? Why am I here? Where am I going? Is the meaning of life found in chasing after the most pleasurable way to get through it—or is there something more? My Christian friends told me all I had to do was “knock and the door will be opened unto you, seek and ye shall find.” (See Matthew 7:7.)

I began knocking. And as I knocked, the Lord answered. Like a seed growing within me, the gospel began taking over my life. I felt the Spirit calling me. I applied at the Yale Divinity School and was accepted. I resigned my judgeship, we rented out our home in southern California, and headed to New Haven, Connecticut. I was in the divinity school though not yet a member of any church.

A very special ward

Arriving in New Haven, we began searching for a home near the campus. However, the Lord had other ideas. Try as we did, we could not find the house we wanted near Yale. Looking back, I now know why. The Lord wanted us in a very special ward about forty miles south of Yale, the New Canaan First Ward.

Many miracles later we found ourselves attending our first Sunday sacrament meeting in this ward. We were received as though we were expected. We had not been inside the building longer than about five minutes when we were introduced to the bishop and his counselors and invited to a dinner party that week. But my attention was first captured by the radiant spirituality of particularly the male members. I wondered: How could they live their professional lives in the fastest fast lane of them all, New York City, yet continue to radiate such a deep spirituality? What was it that caused the tears to well up in their eyes as they testified that Christ lives and the Church is true? I needed to find out.

Joseph Smith story

But I didn't particularly want to be a Mormon, I told my friends. Since I was in the divinity school, I presumed the Lord wanted me in the ministry. What would I do after graduating with an advanced degree in religion if I became a Mormon? Yet I wanted to be the leaf in a stream that I had promised the Lord I would be when we left California.

During the entire time that I was working through, struggling with, and fighting the Joseph Smith story, my friends in the ward were patient, loving, and gentle. Every time I would tell the bishop that Joseph Smith's story was more Disney than Disney, he would tell me, "Maybe so—but it's all true." Every time I would tell the bishop's counselor, "Joseph's story can't be true," he would say to me, "Yes, it is." They genuinely loved me, and I them.

For months I examined, cross-examined, reflected, pondered, and prayed about the Joseph Smith story and the Book of Mormon. I found the book complex, sophisticated, doctrinally profound, and beautiful. The more I studied the text, the more profound and beautiful it became.

Testimony, I know

Much happened over the months. I told my friends and my wife, who was an inactive Mormon and who was beginning to feel some interest in the faith of her forebears, that I would not join the Church to please them, as much as I loved them. I would join only when I had a testimony—when I could say, as a direct witness, that I *know* Joseph Smith was a prophet, that the Book of Mormon is gospel, and the Latter-day Saint church is His church.

In September of last year, the Lord blessed me with that testimony. I now know, without any doubt or uncertainty, without even the ability to conjure up an imaginary doubt, that in the

premortal life the Lord selected Joseph Smith as His prophet in the latter days, that the Book of Mormon was preserved by Christ Himself and delivered to Joseph Smith for translation, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is His church.

I owe a great debt to the New Canaan First Ward and to my dear wife. Their patience, their steadfast loyalty to the restored gospel, and their love for me all combined together to affect me eternally.

I still am uncertain as to what the Lord has in mind for me when I graduate from the Yale Divinity School, but I know this: my wife and I will always continue to serve God, in His church, as leaves in a stream.

I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley: Become examples and teach the word of God

Thank you, Brother Sheffield. I am convinced that there are many, many thousands of men such as this good man who, with warmth and welcome, can be led to the eternal truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. They are looking for something better than they have. They must be friendshiped. They must be fellowshipped. They must be made to feel comfortable and at home, so they can observe in the lives of the members of the Church those virtues they wish for themselves. God bless us, my beloved brethren, to become examples such as influenced Brother Sheffield.

The world is our responsibility. We cannot evade it. I think of the words of Jacob in the Book of Mormon, who with his brother Joseph had been consecrated a priest and teacher unto the people:

"And 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" (Jacob 1:19).

God bless you, my beloved brethren, young and old, to be faithful to the great responsibility placed upon us to share with others this most precious of all things, I humbly ask, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just listened to President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, and Brother William R. Sheffield.

President Ezra Taft Benson, our beloved prophet leader, will be our concluding speaker.

Before President Benson speaks, we note that the nationwide CBS Radio Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 Sunday morning.

Those desiring to attend must be in their seats before 9:15 A.M.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we remind you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

The beautiful music for this priesthood session has been furnished by a returned missionary choir from Brigham Young University.

We are grateful to you brethren for your inspiring music and express sincere thanks for the service you have given here tonight.

Following President Benson's closing remarks, the choir will sing "Carry On." The benediction will be pronounced by Elder Loren C. Dunn, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

President Ezra Taft Benson

My beloved brethren, this has been a glorious meeting.

I have been especially pleased to see the number of young men in attendance this evening. With all my heart I love the youth of the Church. I have spent much of my life in their service, and their well-being and happiness are among my greatest concerns.

Tonight I would like to speak directly to you young men of the Aaronic Priesthood. I am grateful that many of your fathers and priesthood leaders are with you, for I would like them to hear my message also.

Youth of the noble birthright

Young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, you have been born at this time for a sacred and glorious purpose. It is not by chance that you have been reserved to come to earth in this last dispensation of the fulness of times. Your birth at this particular time was fore-ordained in the eternities.

You are to be the royal army of the Lord in the last days. You are "youth of

the noble birthright" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 255).

In the spiritual battles you are waging, I see you as today's sons of Helaman. Remember well the Book of Mormon account of Helaman's two thousand stripling warriors and how the teachings of their mothers gave them strength and faith. These marvelous mothers taught them to put on the whole armor of God, to place their trust in the Lord, and to doubt not. By so doing, not one of these young men was lost. (See Alma 53:10-23; 56:41-56.)

Honor the family unit

My young brethren, I counsel each of you to draw close to your own mother. Respect her. Honor her. Receive your mother's counsel as she loves and instructs you in righteousness. And honor and obey your father as he stands as the head of the home, emulating his manly qualities.

Young men, the family unit is forever, and you should do everything in your power to strengthen that unit. In