

A Time for Hope

Ardeth G. Kapp

I wish I could sit with each one of you in the swing on my back porch this time of year, just as the sun is going down. It is so much fun to listen to the crickets. Those who have trained themselves to listen well can distinguish between a cricket's love call, a danger signal, and other messages that simply say, "I'm here."

Did you know that crickets actually listen with ears they have located on their knees? When I'm on my knees, I try to listen—listen that I might better understand the needs, the wants, the yearnings of you young women. I do this when I read your letters and whenever I have an opportunity to hear you speak your thoughts and feelings.

Would you imagine with me that you're sitting with me in the swing on my back porch, and together let us listen to the messages in some actual letters that I have received from young women recently.

"Dear Sister Kapp:

"This year I have had a hard time with my *self-esteem* and with my friend (who is also LDS) turning on me and going off with other friends. Sometimes I feel terribly lonely. I know Heavenly Father is aware of my problems, but I also know that I must have them to grow, even though that is hard to remember sometimes."

Let us listen to another young woman pouring out her heart:

"They always say something must happen in your life so you want to change. Well, that something has happened. I still have a long way to go. I finally realized that my Father in Heaven is on my side, even though I have betrayed him in a way. I am trying awfully hard to get my life in order and do what is right. I am bound and determined to, no matter how long it takes—but it is so hard. I just wish of all things I could go up and give Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother a big hug and tell them that I made it back."

Let us listen to part of a letter received by an anxious but grateful mother. Her seventeen-year-old daughter would be considered a troublemaker by those who have not learned to recognize a call for help:

"Dear Mom and Dad:

"I know I haven't been much of a daughter. I really hope things can get better between us. Please don't give up on me. Just because I don't say I love you doesn't mean I don't. Please understand what I am trying to say. We'll stay together and love each other through the worst and hardest times. We'll make it 'cause we're a family."

I hear your messages, young women. I hear you with my ears and with my heart. I want to reach out to you and share with you what I have learned over the years about *hope*. I would give it to you if I could, but I've learned that it only comes from your own upward climb. You see, this brief time away from our heavenly home and parents is a time when we are given our agency for the purpose of being tried and tested in every way (see 2 Ne. 2:24–28). You should expect some "down" days and some hard tests. Learn from them. Grow from them. Be stronger because of them. Whenever I face things that I don't understand, I repeat in my mind the words of a song I learned years ago when I wondered if my prayers were being heard and I needed hope to carry on:

*In the furnace God may prove thee,
Thence to bring thee forth more bright,
But can never cease to love thee;
Thou art precious in his sight.
God is with thee, God is with thee;
Thou shalt triumph in his might.*

Families can be your greatest source of strength. My sister Sharon had a record she played over and over until she memorized the lines, and she still repeats them to me on occasion. It's about a young girl in a small mining town in Leadville, Colorado. She was found by some backwoods people, who raised her. They didn't know where she came from, but she had a drive and a hope inside of her that took her from that tiny mining town in Colorado to some of the most prestigious places in all of Europe. As her story unfolds, we learn of her dramatic experience on the ill-fated *Titanic*, which sank to the bottom of the ocean with fifteen hundred people aboard. She managed to get into one of the lifeboats with a few others, and she began rowing. People were gripped with the fear of a watery grave. Many cried out in anguish, "We can't make it." But Molly never heard their cry, or if she did, she paid no attention, and she kept rowing and never gave up. The headlines of the *New York Times* called her the "Unsinkable Molly Brown." She was full of hope, and her unwavering hope inspired others with hope.

In the musical play, *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, we see Molly at first as a young, backwoods girl with few opportunities, no education, and no refinement. She is wrestling with her adopted brothers. They get her down. Her brother says, "You're down, Molly. You're down." And young Molly responds, "I ain't down. I ain't down. And even if I was, you'd sure never hear it from me, 'cause I hate the word *down* but I love the word *up*. 'Cuz up means hope, and that's just what I got. Hope for someplace prettier, and someplace cleaner, and if I've gotta eat catfish heads all my life can't I eat them off a plate just once and in a red silk dress?" Then she begins to sing, and she sings with her heart and soul:

*One day with all my might and my main,
I'm gonna learn to read and write.
I'm gonna see what there is to see.
And if you're goin' from nowhere on the road to somewhere
And you meet anyone, you'll know it's me.*

Does that sound like hope to you?

I used to wonder where that road to somewhere was and how I'd ever find it. As a young girl, I remember standing at the kitchen window of our home and looking out, down the gravel road toward the east, as far out as I could see. On each side of the road was tall grass in the summer and deep snow in the winter, and only a few houses sprinkled along the way. I used to wonder, "What is out there for me? Where do I belong?" I'm sure you must wonder that sometimes. At the end of our gravel road was the Indian reservation, and across the river a Hutterite colony. Things didn't seem too hopeful for me at that time. School had been very difficult for me. My friends were moving on without me, and I felt dumb. Do you have any idea what that feels like? It's awful.

When I was twelve years old and feeling very discouraged after a long, hard winter, my mom and dad had a plan they worked out at some sacrifice that they hoped would give me hope. They determined to take me with them beyond our gravel road, out across the Canadian border, through the great states of Montana and Idaho, and eventually to Salt Lake City, Utah, the headquarters of the Church, to attend general conference.

We arrived early on the first day of conference and waited in line, hoping to enter the great dome-shaped Tabernacle that I had only seen in pictures. I remember we had a seat right over there in the balcony on the left side where I could look down and actually see the prophet in real life and hear him speak, a thing I never dreamed would ever happen to me. When I heard the prophet of God speak at that time, I felt he was talking to me. The feeling I had was one of hope, and I began to understand about the real road to somewhere. I determined right then to plant my feet on that road—the strait and narrow path leading to the celestial kingdom—and never, never give up. I have come to know without any question that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the pathway to hope that leads us back to our Heavenly Father and our eternal home.

Listen to our Father’s promise to us. He says, “Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love” (D&C 6:20).

And he comforts us, saying:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me [that means taking upon us his name and following him]; for I am meek and lowly in heart [that means gentle and humble]: and ye shall find rest unto your souls [that means comfort and peace” (Matt. 11:28–29).

Now, if we were sitting together on my back porch, I would stop and ask you, “Do you understand the plan of our Heavenly Father and your part in it? Have you received your patriarchal blessing? Do you know you are literally youth of the noble birthright?”

Young women, I plead with you, find your own back porch, away from the demanding, loud voices of the world. Learn to really listen—not to the crickets, but to the constant whisperings of the Spirit with its messages of hope prompting you each step of the way on your road to the celestial kingdom.

Can you imagine what could happen if every young girl were sending out messages of hope to the world that would inspire others to never give up?

That is exactly what is happening. Let me explain what I mean. As most of you are aware by now, all three hundred thousand young women of the Church have been invited to participate in a magnificent, worldwide celebration. You have been invited to prepare brief messages of love and hope to the world and attach them to helium-filled balloons to be released at sunrise on October 11. In some cases, for various reasons, the messages of hope and love are being sent in advance to Salt Lake City to be given to other young women to release.

Many of them begin, “Dear person who finds this balloon.” Angela Santana sends her message of love from Brazil. She writes on the envelope, “If a man still has hope, he is never completely unhappy.”

Shauna Bocutt, age fifteen, from Africa, includes her personal testimony: “I know my Heavenly Father loves me because I have asked.”

From the Philippines: “Hi! I’m Dhezie Jimeno, 16 years old. I would like to share with you a message which I hope you’ll keep to your heart’s delight. This message is that God cares and loves you very, very much. Yes, in life we experience pain and heartaches, sorrows and tribulations, but mind you, all these things are just to give us experience; and besides, we can make them work for our own good. Difficulties are just God’s errands. If we

are sent upon them, it is an evidence of his confidence. Therefore, let us be glad, be happy, for it is a way of being wise. God loves you and he is ever willing to help you at all times. Just call on him through fervent prayers. I know God never fails; he is there, he is listening, and he cares very deeply about you. You've got a friend."

Thousands of young women writing messages of love and hope sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ worldwide give us reason to celebrate.

With daily prayer, scripture study, and our feet firmly planted on the road to the celestial kingdom, we have a "perfect brightness of hope" (2 Ne. 31:20). There will be some steep climbs ahead, but our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has covenanted and promised to climb with each of us every step of the way. Think of it! Young women, covenant this day, this very day, if you haven't already, to plant your feet firmly on the path to the celestial kingdom. Lift up your heart, lift up your heart, and let your soul rejoice, and never, never, never give up. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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