

D&C 20:17–21). Jesus Christ is his Only Begotten Son, Jehovah, the Holy One and God of Israel, the Messiah, “the God of the whole earth” (3 Nephi 11:14). As the Book of Mormon declares, “Salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:18; see also Moses 6:52, 59). The scriptures proclaim and we reverently affirm that Jesus Christ is the light and life of the world.

What does this knowledge mean to Latter-day Saints? (We call ourselves “Saints” because this is the scriptural term for those who have sought to make their lives holy by entering into covenants to follow Christ.)

Our Savior is the light of the world. We should live so that we can be enlightened by his Spirit, and so that we may hear and heed the ratifying seal of the Holy Ghost, which testifies of the Father and the Son (see D&C 20:26). We should study the principles of his gospel and receive its ordinances. We should keep his commandments, including his two great commandments to love God and to love and serve our neighbors (see Matthew 22:36–40). We should be faithful to the covenants we have made in the name of Jesus Christ.

Our Savior is also the *life* of the world. We should give thanks for his absolute gift of immortality. We should receive the ordinances and keep the covenants necessary to receive his con-

ditional gift of life eternal, the greatest of all the gifts of God (see D&C 14:7).

### **Come unto Christ**

In short, Latter-day Saints invite each other and all men and women everywhere to “come unto Christ.” As a prophet has told us in the Book of Mormon: “I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26).

May God bless all of us to come unto Christ. I testify that he is our Savior and our Redeemer, the light and the life of the world, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang “Truth Eternal” without announcement.

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### **President Monson**

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing “Truth Eternal.”

President Benson has asked that I serve as concluding speaker at this session of our conference.

## **President Thomas S. Monson**

### **We live in a wicked world**

Recently there moved over the wires of Associated Press a catalog of crime as the daily happenings around the world were relayed to the media and thence to the homes on every continent.

The headlines were brief. They highlighted murder, rape, robbery, molestation, fraud, deceit, and corruption. I made note of several: “Man Slays

Wife and Children, Then Turns Gun on Self”; “Child Identifies Molester”; “Hundreds Lose All As Multimillion-Dollar Scam Is Exposed.” The sordid list continued. Shades of Sodom, glimpses of Gomorrah.

President Ezra Taft Benson has often stated, “We live in a wicked world.” The Apostle Paul warned, “Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud,

blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2-4).

### "The doorway of love"

Must we suffer the same fate as those who lived in the cities of the plain? Can we not learn the lesson taught in the time of Noah? "Is there no balm in Gilead?" (Jeremiah 8:22). Or is there a doorway that leads us from the morass of worldliness onward and upward to the high ground of righteousness? There echoes ever so gently to the honest mind that personal invitation of the Lord: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20). Does that doorway have a name? It surely does. I have chosen to call it "the doorway of love."

Love is the catalyst that causes change. Love is the balm that brings healing to the soul. But love doesn't grow like weeds or fall like rain. Love has its price. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). That Son, even the Lord Jesus Christ, gave His life that we might have eternal life, so great was His love for His Father and for us.

This same Jesus was approached by a lawyer who asked, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

In that tender and touching farewell, as He counseled His beloved

disciples, Jesus taught: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21). Particularly far-reaching was the instruction, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

### Love at home

Little children can learn the lesson of love. Profound instruction from holy writ oftentimes is not understood by them. However, they respond readily to a favorite verse:

*"I love you, Mother," said little  
John;  
Then, forgetting his work, his cap  
went on,  
And he was off to the garden  
swing,  
And left her the water and wood to  
bring.  
"I love you, Mother," said rosy  
Nell—  
"I love you better than tongue can  
tell";  
Then she teased and pouted full  
half the day,  
Till her mother rejoiced when she  
went to play.  
"I love you, Mother," said little  
Fan;  
"Today I'll help you all I can;  
How glad I am that school doesn't  
keep!"  
So she rocked the babe till it fell  
asleep.  
Then, stepping softly, she fetched  
the broom,  
And swept the floor and tidied the  
room;  
Busy and happy all day was she,  
Helpful and happy as child could  
be.  
"I love you, Mother," again they  
said,  
Three little children going to bed;  
How do you think that mother  
guessed  
Which of them really loved her  
best?  
(Joy Allison, in *The World's Best**

*Loved Poems*, comp. James Gilchrist Lawson [New York: Harper and Row, 1955], pp. 243-44)

Home should be a haven of love. Honor, courtesy, and respect symbolize love and characterize the righteous family. Fathers in such homes will not hear the denunciation of the Lord as recorded in the book of Jacob: "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you" (Jacob 2:35).

#### Let peace on earth begin with me

In 3 Nephi the Master instructed: "There shall be no disputations among you. . . .

"For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

"Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:28-30).

Where love is, there is no disputation. Where love is, there is no contention. Where love is, there God will be also. Each of us has the responsibility to keep His commandments. The lessons found in scripture find fulfillment in our lives. Joseph Smith taught that "happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], pp. 255-56).

In the classic musical production *Camelot*, there is a line with words of warning for all. After the familiar triangle began to deepen regarding King

Arthur, Lancelot, and Guenevere, King Arthur said, "We must not let our passions destroy our dreams."

From that same production came another truth also spoken by Arthur as he envisioned a better world: "Violence is not strength, and compassion is not weakness."

In this world in which we live, there is a tendency for us to describe needed change, required help, and desired relief with the familiar phrase, "They ought to do something about this." We fail to define the word *they*. I love the message, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me."

Tears came to my eyes when I read of a mere boy in one of our eastern cities who noticed a vagrant asleep on a sidewalk and who then went to his own bedroom, retrieved his own pillow, and placed it beneath the head of that one whom he knew not. Perhaps there came from the precious past the welcome words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

I extol those who, with loving care and compassionate concern, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and house the homeless. He who notes the sparrow's fall will not be unmindful of such service.

*A bell is no bell till you ring it,  
A song is no song till you sing it;  
And love in your heart wasn't put  
there to stay.*

*Love isn't love till you give it  
away.*

("Sixteen Going on Seventeen,"  
from *The Sound of Music*, Rodgers  
and Hammerstein)

#### Lift, help, and give

From the Holy Bible we read: "And it came to pass . . . that [Jesus] went into a city called Nain. . . .

"When he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. . . .

"And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

"And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still."

In the majesty of his messianic ministry, He declared: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

"And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother" (Luke 7:11-15).

The desire to lift, the willingness to help, and the graciousness to give come from a heart filled with love.

### Show your love

The poet wrote, "Love is the most noble attribute of the human soul." And William Shakespeare cautioned, "They do not love that do not show their love" (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, act 1, scene 2, line 31).

A school teacher showed her love with her guiding philosophy: "No one fails in my class. I have the responsibility to help each student succeed."

A priesthood quorum leader in Salt Lake City—a retired executive—said to me: "This year I have helped twelve of my brethren who were out of work to obtain permanent employment. I have never been happier in my entire life." Short in stature, "Little Ed," as we affectionately called him, stood tall that day as his eyes glistened and his voice quavered. He showed his love by helping those in need.

A large and tough businessman, a wholesale vendor of poultry, showed his love with a single comment made when one attempted to pay for twenty-four roasting chickens. "The chickens are going to the widows, aren't they? There will be no charge." As he placed them in the car trunk, he said in a faltering voice: "And there are more where these came from."

Robert Woodruff, an executive in a former generation, traversed America with a message which he delivered to civic and business groups. The outline was simple, the message brief:

The five most important words are these: *I am proud of you.*

The four most important words are these: *What is your opinion?*

The three most important words are these: *If you please.*

The two most important words are these: *Thank you.*

To Mr. Woodruff's list I would add, The single most important word is *love.*

A few years ago Morgan High School played Millard High for the state football championship. From his wheelchair, to which Morgan coach Jan Smith was confined, he said to his team: "This is the most important game of your lives. You lose and you will regret it forever. You win, and you will remember it forever. Make every play as though it were all-important."

Behind the door, his wife, whom he tenderly referred to as his chief assistant, overheard her husband say, "I love you guys. I don't care about the ball game. I love you and want the game victory for you." Underdog Morgan High won the football game and the state championship.

True love is a reflection of Christ's love. In December of each year we call it the Christmas spirit. You can hear it. You can see it. You can feel it. But never alone.

### The wondrous gift of love

One winter day, I thought back to an experience from my boyhood. I was just eleven. Our Primary president, Melissa, was an older and loving gray-haired lady. One day at Primary, Melissa asked me to stay behind and visit with her. There the two of us sat in the otherwise-empty chapel. She placed her arm about my shoulder and began to cry.

Surprised, I asked her why she was crying.

She replied, "I don't seem to be able to encourage the Trail Builder boys to be reverent during the opening exercises of Primary. Would you be willing to help me, Tommy?"

I promised Melissa that I would. Strangely to me, but not to Melissa,

that ended any problem of reverence in that Primary. She had gone to the source of the problem—me. The solution was love.

The years flew by. Marvelous Melissa, now in her nineties, lived in a nursing facility in the northwest part of Salt Lake City. Just before Christmas I determined to visit my beloved Primary president. Over the car radio, I heard the song, "Hark! the herald angels sing; Glory to the newborn King!" (*Hymns* [1985], no. 209). I reflected on the visit made by wise men those long years ago. They brought gifts of gold, of frankincense, and of myrrh. I brought only the gift of love and a desire to say thank you.

I found Melissa in the lunchroom. She was staring at her plate of food, teasing it with the fork she held in her aged hand. Not a bite did she eat. As I spoke to her, my words were met by a benign but blank stare. I took the fork in hand and began to feed Melissa, talking all the time I did so about her service to boys and girls as a Primary worker. There wasn't so much as a glimmer of recognition, far less a spoken word. Two other residents of the nursing home gazed at me with puzzled expressions. At last they spoke, saying, "Don't talk to her. She doesn't know anyone—even her own family. She hasn't said a word in all the years she's been here."

Luncheon ended. My one-sided conversation wound down. I stood to leave. I held her frail hand in mine, gazed into her wrinkled but beautiful countenance, and said, "God bless you, Melissa. Merry Christmas."

Without warning, she spoke the words, "I know you. You're Tommy Monson, my Primary boy. How I love you." She pressed my hand to her lips and bestowed on it the kiss of love. Tears coursed down her cheeks and bathed our clasped hands. Those

hands, that day, were hallowed by heaven and graced by God. The herald angels did sing. The words of the Master seemed to have a personal meaning never before fully felt: "Woman, behold thy son!" And to his disciple, "Behold thy mother!" (see John 19:26–27).

Outside the sky was blue—azure blue. The air was cool—crispy cool. The snow was white—crystal white.

From Bethlehem there seemed to echo the words:

*How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of his heav'n.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
But in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive  
him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.  
("O Little Town of Bethlehem,"  
*Hymns* [1985], no. 208)*

The wondrous gift was given, the heavenly blessing was received, the dear Christ had entered in—all through the doorway called love. I declare this solemn truth in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

The Tabernacle Choir will sing in closing "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good." The benediction will be offered by Bishop Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, and this conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

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The choir sang "Each Life That Touches Ours for Good."

Bishop Henry B. Eyring offered the benediction.

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