

President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah, in this, the fourth general session of the 158th semiannual conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our beloved prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, who presides at this and all sessions of the conference, has asked me to conduct these services.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle and in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elder Keith W. Wilcox and Bishop Glenn L. Pace are seated on the stand. We also extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the stations who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and officers and members of the Church from many lands who have

assembled to worship and to counsel together.

The Tabernacle Choir is providing the music for this session under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger, with Brother Robert Cundick at the organ.

The choir opened these services by singing "O Ye Mountains High" and will now sing "O Love That Glorifies the Son," following which Elder F. Burton Howard, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will offer the invocation.

The choir sang "O Love That Glorifies the Son."

Elder F. Burton Howard offered the invocation.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our first speaker this morning.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A missionary couple heals and helps

My brothers and sisters, let me tell you of a recent experience. We were in the city of Bacolod on the island of Negros Occidente in the Republic of the Philippines. There, to my great surprise, I met a man I had not seen in years.

The weather was steamy hot, as it always is in Bacolod, the center of the once thriving Filipino sugar industry. My friend was in a short-sleeved white shirt with dark trousers, his shoes shined. His beautiful wife, Marva, was beside him. I said, "Victor Jex, what are you doing here?"

He smiled and replied, "We're doing the Lord's work. We're helping the people. We're missionaries."

"Where do you live?"

"In a little house in Iloilo on the island of Panay. We came over on the ferry for the conference."

I thought of when I had last seen them. It was a few years ago. They then lived in a beautiful home in Scarsdale, New York. He was a widely recognized and honored chemist, with a doctorate in chemical engineering. He worked for one of the big multinational companies headquartered in New York. He was credited with putting together the chemical ingredients of a product now sold around the world, the name of which is known to millions of people and the profit from which has run into many millions of dollars for his company.

He was well paid and highly respected.

He was also the president of the Yorktown stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He had under his direction a corps of church workers who served faithfully in their local wards, many of whom commuted each day to

and from New York City where they held high and responsible positions in some of the great corporations of America. He was their church leader.

Now he was retired. He and his wife had sold their beautiful home, had given their children what furniture they wanted, and donated the rest to others. They had disposed of their cars and everything except their clothing, their family photographs, and their family history records. They had made themselves available to the Lord and His church to go wherever they might be sent at their own expense. They were now in the Philippines Bacolod Mission, working among the wonderful, friendly, brown-skinned people of the area. Unemployment is high in this region, and there is much of misery. But wherever Elder and Sister Jex go, they touch for good the lives of those among whom they serve.

They are there to heal the suffering people, to teach the gospel of Christ, to give encouragement and strength and hope and faith. They are there to heal wounds of misunderstanding and contention. They are there to bless the sick and to help those with diseased bodies and frustrated minds. Their smile is infectious, their laugh a joy to hear. They are living humbly among the poor, down at the level of the people, but standing straight and tall to lift with strong hands.

This former New York executive and his charming companion are in the service of the Savior, giving their full time, their resources, and their love to bless with healing the lives of many who are discouraged and need help. Here is a retired New Yorker, a man of great learning and recognized capacity, living in a home with few conveniences, a simple little place that would fit in the living room of his former house.

He and his wife are there, with others of their kind. They are two of a band of remarkable and dedicated older missionary couples who minister to the wants of people with numerous problems. They receive no financial compensation. They pay their own way. This world's goods mean little to them. As I said, they sold

all they had when they left to come to the Philippines. They will stay for as long as they are assigned by the Church to do so. Then they want to go on another mission. They are healers among the people, serving in the cause of the Master Healer.

The healing power of Christ

I have since reflected much on the power of Christ to heal and bless. It was He who said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). In a world of sickness and sorrow, of tension and jealousy and greed, there must be much of healing if there is to be life abundant.

The prophet Malachi declared, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2).

Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled. Jesus came to earth, the Son of God, with power over life and death. He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, caused the lame to walk, and the dead to rise. He was the man of miracles who "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

"So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee. . . . And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

"When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. . . .

"Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

"And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth" (John 4:46-47, 50-51).

This, the second miracle wrought by the Master, was followed by other miracles of healing.

Christ healed by the power of God which was within Him. That power He gave to His chosen disciples, saying, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

Healing power has been restored

That same power has been restored in this generation. It came through the laying on of hands by Peter, James, and John, who received it from the Lord Himself. It was bestowed upon Joseph Smith, the prophet of this dispensation. Its presence is among us. Many of you are acquainted with the history of the Church and are familiar with the account related by Wilford Woodruff concerning the events of July 22, 1839. It is worthy of repetition. Nauvoo at that time was an unhealthy and swampy place. There was much of sickness. Joseph was among those who were afflicted. But being filled with the Spirit, he rose from his bed and went out among the sick, healing them and raising them. He then crossed the river to the settlement in Montrose, Iowa. I read now from the account of Elder Woodruff:

"The first house he visited was that occupied by Elder Brigham Young, the president of the quorum of the twelve, who lay sick. Joseph healed him, then he arose and accompanied the Prophet on his visit to others who were in the same condition. They visited Elder W. Woodruff, also Elders Orson Pratt and John Taylor, all of whom were living in Montrose. They also accompanied him. The next place they visited was the home of Elijah Fordham, who was supposed to be about breathing his last. When the company entered the room the Prophet of God walked up to the dying man, and took hold of his right hand and spoke to him; but Brother Fordham was unable to speak, his eyes were set in his head like glass, and he seemed entirely unconscious of all around him. Joseph held his hand and looked into his eyes in silence for a length of time. A change in the countenance of Brother Fordham was soon perceptible to all present. His sight returned, and upon Joseph asking him if he knew him, he, in a low whisper, answered, 'Yes.' Joseph asked him if he had faith to be healed. He answered, 'I fear it is too late; if you had come sooner I think I would have been healed.' The Prophet said, 'Do you believe in Jesus Christ?' He answered in a feeble voice, 'I do.' Joseph then stood

erect, still holding his hand in silence several moments; then he spoke in a very loud voice, saying: 'Brother Fordham, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to arise from this bed and be made whole.' His voice was like the voice of God, and not of man. It seemed as though the house shook to its very foundations. Brother Fordham arose from his bed and was immediately made whole. His feet were bound in poultices, which he kicked off, then putting on his clothes, he ate a bowl of bread and milk, and followed the Prophet into the street" (in Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History*, rev. ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1979], pp. 223-24).

Declared James of old: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:14-15).

That power to heal the sick is still among us. It is the power of the priesthood of God. It is the authority held by the elders of this Church.

A transcendent power

We welcome and praise and utilize the marvelous procedures of modern medicine which have done so much to alleviate human suffering and lengthen human life. All of us are indebted to the dedicated men and women of science and medicine who have conquered so much of disease, who have mitigated pain, who have stayed the hand of death. I cannot say enough of gratitude for them.

Yet they are the first to admit the limitations of their knowledge and the imperfection of their skills in dealing with many matters of life and death. The mighty Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that in them are has given to His servants a divine power that sometimes transcends all the powers and knowledge of men. I venture to say that there is scarcely a faithful elder within the sound of my voice who could not recount

instances in which this healing power has been made manifest in behalf of the sick. It is the healing power of Christ.

The sickness of sin

And there is much of sickness among us other than that of the body.

There is the sickness of sin. One of our national magazines carried an extensive review of a sacrilegious film being shown in theaters across the world. Letters poured in to the editor. I quote from one of these. Said the writer, "I am a former alcoholic and adulterer set free by the power of the living Jesus Christ" (*Time*, 5 Sept. 1988, p. 7).

Legion are those who have testified of the healing power of Christ to lift them from the desolation of sin to higher and nobler living.

Sickness caused by selfishness

There is much of another category of sickness among us. I speak of conflicts, quarrels, arguments which are a debilitating disease particularly afflicting families. If there be such problems in the homes of any within the sound of my voice, I encourage you to invite the healing power of Christ. To those to whom He spoke on the Mount, Jesus said:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. . . .

"And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Matthew 5:38-39, 41).

The application of this principle, difficult to live but wondrous in its curative powers, would have a miraculous effect on our troubled homes. It is selfishness which is the cause of most of our misery. It is as a cankering disease. The healing power of Christ, found in the doctrine of going the second mile, would do wonders to still argument and accusation, fault-finding and evil speaking.

Our duty and capacity to heal

The same healing spirit would do wonders for the sickness of our society. The Lord has declared that it is our duty, as those blessed with the healing power of the Master, to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

Great is the healing capacity of those who follow the admonition given by James: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

Invoke healing powers in worldly conflicts

We live in an environment where there is much of litigation and conflict, of suing and countersuing. Even here the powers of healing may be invoked. As a young man I worked with Elder Stephen L. Richards, then of the Council of the Twelve. When he came into the First Presidency of the Church, he asked me to assist him with a very delicate and sensitive matter. It was fraught with most grave and serious consequences. After listening to him discuss it, I said, "President Richards, you don't want me; you want a lawyer." He said, "I am a lawyer. I don't want to litigate this. I want to compose it."

We directed our efforts to that end, and wonderful results followed. Money was saved, much of it. Embarrassment was avoided. The work was moved forward without fanfare or headlines. Wounds were closed. The healing powers of the Master, the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, were invoked in a delicate and difficult situation to compose what otherwise could have become a catastrophe.

Exercise healing power inwardly

It is not always easy to live by these doctrines when our very natures impel us to fight back. For instance, there are those who have made it the mission of their

lives to try to destroy this, the work of God. It has been so from the beginning of the Church, and now, in recent times, we are seeing more of it with evil accusations, falsehoods, and innuendo designed to embarrass this work and its officers. A natural inclination is to fight back, to challenge these falsehoods and bring action against their perpetrators. But when these inclinations make themselves felt, there arise also the words of the Master healer, who said:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44).

Most of us have not reached that stage of compassion and love and forgiveness. It is not easy. It requires a self-discipline almost greater than we are capable of. But as we try, we come to know that there is a resource of healing, that there is a mighty power of healing in Christ, and that if we are to be His true servants we must not only exercise that healing power in behalf of others, but, perhaps more important, inwardly.

Ours is a ministry of healing

I would that the healing power of Christ might spread over the earth and be diffused through our society and into our homes, that it might cure men's hearts of the evil and adverse elements of greed and hate and conflict. I believe it could happen. I believe it must happen. If the lamb is to lie down with the lion, then

peace must overcome conflict, healing must mend injury.

Jesus of Nazareth healed the sick among whom He moved. His regenerating power is with us today to be invoked through His holy priesthood. His divine teachings, His incomparable example, His matchless life, His all-encompassing sacrifice will bring healing to broken hearts, reconciliation to those who argue and shout, even peace to warring nations if sought with humility and forgiveness and love.

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, ours is a ministry of healing, with a duty to bind the wounds and ease the pain of those who suffer. Upon a world afflicted with greed and contention, upon families distressed by argument and selfishness, upon individuals burdened with sin and troubles and sorrows, I invoke the healing power of Christ, giving my witness of its efficacy and wonder. I testify of Him who is the great source of healing. He is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, "The Sun of Righteousness," who came "with healing in his wings." Of this I humbly testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

President Gordon B. Hinckley, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "The Lord's Prayer," following which President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will speak to us.

The choir sang "The Lord's Prayer."

President Howard W. Hunter

The promise of divine guidance

All of us face times in our lives when we need heavenly help in a special and urgent way. We all have moments when we are overwhelmed by circumstances or

confused by the counsel we get from others, and we feel a great need to receive spiritual guidance, a great need to find the right path and do the right thing. In the scriptural preface to this latter-day dispensation, the Lord promised that if we