

President Thomas S. Monson

President Benson has suggested that I commence this conference with a brief message given in his behalf and that I convey to listeners and viewers far and near his greeting, his love, and his blessing.

Changes since last conference

The spirit of spring is very much in evidence here on historic Temple Square. The manicured lawns have discarded their drab winter color and now appear as a carpet of green accentuating the elegant flower beds with their brilliant blooms. It is a period of renewal, a time of gratitude, and a season for reflection.

The world has experienced sweeping changes since last we met. A wall in Berlin has crumbled. Families now may join together on either side and experience the joy they have long been deprived of. In Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic, the bells of freedom have sounded, heralding a new day for our time.

Serving the needs of the world

All of us remember, President Benson, that dark period following World War II when our members were near starvation and bordering on despair. Then you undertook your dramatic assignment to supervise the distribution of food, clothing, and medical supplies from the storehouse of the Church to the war-devastated families in Europe.

Your words, President, echo loud and clear: "We must 'dedicate our strength to serving the needs, rather than the fears, of the world.' . . . I believe errands of mercy, such as the distribution of food, housing, and clothing to those in need, are rendered most effectively when handled by private individuals and organizations such as the Church" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 261).

In the spirit of President Benson's counsel, we have a responsibility to ex-

tend help as well as hope to the hungry, to the homeless, and to the downtrodden both at home and abroad. Such assistance is being provided for the blessing of all. In a host of cities, where need has outdistanced help, lives have been lifted, hearts have been touched, and the frown of despair has been transformed to the smile of confidence, thanks to the generosity of the Church membership in the payment of their fast offerings as the Lord has commanded.

Counsel to the youth of the Church

To the youth of the Church—President Benson has long been your champion and advocate. On a previous occasion he summed up the feelings of all your leaders when he declared, "Beloved youth, you will have your trials and temptations through which you must pass, but there are great moments of eternity which lie ahead. You have our love and our confidence. We pray that you will be prepared for the reins of leadership. We say to you, 'Arise and shine forth' (D&C 115:5) and be a light unto the world, a standard to others" ("To 'The Rising Generation,'" *New Era*, June 1986, p. 8).

My young brothers and sisters, from the days President Benson was a Scoutmaster to the present period of presiding over the entire Church, he has not forgotten you. He rejoices in your achievements; he admires your strengths. He is your friend and your advocate.

Prayer and temple attendance

To the parents of the Church—President Benson has long urged that a good example is the best teacher. I have heard him offer sublime prayers to our Heavenly Father. Simple supplication, generous gratitude mark these petitions. Children joining parents in prayer will tend to be united with their families and found following the teachings of the Lord.

How President Benson and his beloved wife, Flora, enjoy attending the temple each week! His feeling for the temple is found in his statement: "I love the temples of God. This is the closest place to heaven on earth—the house of the Lord" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988], p. 253).

We should live in brotherhood

As this conference commences, I join President Benson, and know that I reflect the feelings of President Hinckley and all other General Authorities as well, in declaring our love for Heavenly Father's children everywhere. Perhaps never in history has the need for cooperation, understanding, and goodwill among all people—nations and individuals alike—been so urgent as today. It is not only fitting, it is imperative that we emphasize the ideal of brotherhood and the responsibility true brotherhood confers upon us all.

As Edwin Markham observed:

There is a destiny that makes us
brothers;
None goes his way alone:

All that we send into the lives of
others
Comes back into our own.

We should follow the Savior

Let us live the commandments of God. Let us follow in the footsteps of His Son and our Savior, even Jesus Christ the Lord. As we sincerely and fervently seek Him, we shall indeed find Him.

He may come to us as one unknown, without a name—as of old, 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, and the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship; and they shall learn in their own experience who He is.

I bear to you my witness that God does live, that Jesus is the Christ, our Redeemer, and that we are led today by God's prophet, even President Ezra Taft Benson, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Brothers and sisters, I suppose you are as amazed as I am with the monumental world events that we see unfolding. As Latter-day Saints, we recognize the hand of God working to bring about his purposes in the earth. We know that the "stone [that] was cut out without hands" will continue to roll forth to fill the whole earth (see Daniel 2:34–35). These are exciting times to be alive.

Small and simple things shape lives

We observe vast, sweeping world events; however, we must remember that the purposes of the Lord in our personal

lives generally are fulfilled through the small and simple things and not the momentous and spectacular.

Alma, teaching his son Helaman about the importance of the record written on the plates of brass, said:

"Behold I say unto you, that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass; and small means in many instances doth confound the wise.

"And the Lord God doth work by means to bring about his great and eternal purposes; and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls" (Alma 37:6–7).