

and following the Savior, we can change a crown of thorns to a crown of glory. I testify, as one of his humble servants called to be his special witness, that he lives. I witness from the depths of my soul that we are engaged in his holy work, to which, if we are faithful, we can be crowned with honor, glory, and eternal life (see D&C 75:5). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Let My Heart Be Pure" without announcement.

President Hinckley

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Let My Heart Be Pure."

Following my remarks, the choir will conclude this session by singing "Help Me Teach with Inspiration." The benediction will then be offered by Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church. This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

At one o'clock the Nauvoo Bell and other bells across the nation will ring as part of the three days of national thanksgiving commemorating the end of the Persian Gulf War.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Granddaughters' wedding ceremonies

Ten days ago, I had a beautiful and touching experience in the Salt Lake Temple, the building immediately to the east of this tabernacle. There in that holy sanctuary I had the privilege of sealing in marriage, in two separate but consecutive ceremonies, two beautiful young women who are twins, each to a handsome and able young man of her choice. That evening a double wedding reception was held where hundreds of friends came to express their love and good wishes.

Mothers often shed tears at a wedding ceremony. Sisters also, and sometimes fathers. Seldom do grandparents show any emotion. But these beautiful girls were my own granddaughters, and I must confess that this old grandfather choked up and had a difficult time. I don't understand why. Certainly it was a happy occasion, a fulfillment of dreams and prayers. Perhaps my tears were really an expression of joy and of gratitude to God for these lovely brides and their handsome young husbands.

In sacred promises, they pledged their love and loyalty one to another for time and all eternity.

Marriage is ordained of God

How wonderful a thing is marriage under the plan of our Eternal Father, a plan provided in His divine wisdom for the happiness and security of His children and the continuity of the race.

He is our Creator, and He designed marriage from the beginning. At the time of Eve's creation, "Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: . . .

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:23-24).

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Saints, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11).

In modern revelation the Lord has said, "And again, verily I say unto you,

that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man" (D&C 49:15).

President Joseph F. Smith once declared "that no man can be saved and exalted in the kingdom of God without the woman, and no woman can reach perfection and exaltation in the kingdom of God, alone. . . . God instituted marriage in the beginning. He made man in His own image and likeness, male and female, and in their creation it was designed that they should be united together in sacred bonds of marriage, and one is not perfect without the other" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1913, p. 118).

Surely no one reading the scriptures, both ancient and modern, can doubt the divine concept of marriage. The sweetest feelings of life, the most generous and satisfying impulses of the human heart, find expression in a marriage that stands pure and unsullied above the evil of the world.

Such a marriage, I believe, is the desire—the hoped-for, the longed-for, the prayed-for—of men and women everywhere.

Single brethren and sisters

While riding a plane some time ago, I picked up a copy of the *New York Magazine*. As I thumbed through it, I came to a section titled "Strictly Personals." I counted 159 advertisements placed by lonely men and women seeking partners. It was evident that those who had placed the ads had labored to cast themselves in the best light possible. I wish I had time to read some of them to you. You would enjoy them. There was nothing of an unseemly nature. It was easy to sense that behind these witty and clever descriptions was much of sadness and loneliness, a great desire to find an amiable companion with whom to walk the road of life.

My heart reaches out to those among us, especially our single sisters,

who long for marriage and cannot seem to find it. Our Father in Heaven reserves for them every promised blessing. I have far less sympathy for the young men, who under the customs of our society have the prerogative to take the initiative in these matters but in so many cases fail to do so. Strong words have been spoken to them in the past by Presidents of this church.

Marital bliss

Marriage usually means children and family. Can a young mother, having given birth to her first child, doubt the divinity and the wonder and the miracle of it all? Can a young father, looking upon his newborn son or daughter, sense other than that this is a part of the design of the Almighty?

Of course, all in marriage is not bliss. Years ago I clipped these words from a column written by Jenkins Lloyd Jones:

"There seems to be a superstition among many thousands of our young who hold hands and smooch in the drive-ins that marriage is a cottage surrounded by perpetual hollyhocks to which a perpetually young and handsome husband comes home to a perpetually young and ravishing wife. When the hollyhocks wither and boredom and bills appear the divorce courts are jammed. . . .

"Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he has been robbed" ("Big Rock Candy Mountains," *Deseret News*, 12 June 1973, p. A4).

Pain is part of the process

Stormy weather occasionally hits every household. Connected inevitably with the whole process is much of pain—physical, mental, and emotional. There is much of stress and struggle, of fear and worry. For most, there is the

ever-haunting battle of economics. There seems never to be enough money to cover the needs of a family. Sickness strikes periodically. Accidents happen. The hand of death may reach in with dread stealth to take a precious one.

But all of this seems to be part of the processes of family life. Few indeed are those who get along without experiencing some of it. It has been so from the beginning. Cain quarreled with Abel and then did a terrible thing. How great must have been the grief in the hearts of their parents, Adam and Eve.

Love for rebellious children

Absalom was the third son of David, a son favored and loved. David had given him a name which meant "father of peace." But he brought not peace—rather, anger and ambition and sorrow. He killed his brother and conspired against his father. In the midst of his evil actions, in his wicked pursuit for his father's throne, while Absalom rode a mule, his head caught in the branches of an oak tree, and he was left hanging helpless. Joab, nephew of David and captain of the king's army, seizing the opportunity to get rid of this rebellious and traitorous son, pierced his heart with darts. He apparently felt he was doing a favor to the king.

But when David heard of his son's death, even though that son had conspired to destroy him, "the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son! . . . [And] the king covered his face, and . . . cried" (2 Samuel 18:33; 19:4).

Through the history of the generations of man, the actions of rebellious

children have been laden with sorrow and heartbreak, but even when there has been rebellion, the strong cords of family life have reached out to encircle the rebellious one.

I know of no more beautiful story in all of literature than that told by the Master as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. It is the story of a heady and greedy son who demanded his inheritance, which he wasted until none was left. Penitent, he returned to his father, and his father, seeing him afar off, ran to him and embraced him and fell upon his neck and kissed him.

The great scourge of divorce

Some of you within the sound of my voice could recount family sorrows in your own experience. But among the greatest of tragedies, and I think the most common, is divorce. It has become as a great scourge. The most recent issue of the *World Almanac* says that in the United States during the twelve months ending with March 1990, an estimated 2,423,000 couples married. During this same period, an estimated 1,177,000 couples divorced. (See *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1991* [New York: World Almanac, 1990], p. 834.)

This means that in the United States almost one divorce occurred for every two marriages.

Those are only figures written on the pages of a book. But behind them lies more of betrayal, more of sorrow, more of neglect and poverty and struggle than the human mind can imagine. Millions of those divorced in this nation are lonely, frustrated, insecure, and unhappy. Millions of single parents are struggling to rear families, carrying burdens beyond their capacity to handle. Millions of children are growing up in single-parent homes from which the parent, usually the

mother, out of necessity is absent much of the time. These "latch-key children" return from school each day to empty houses, where, in many cases, there is inadequate food and only the refuge of the television set. Not only are the children suffering, but all of society is paying a frightful price for their circumstances. As they grow older, the incidence of drugs increases among them. Vast numbers turn to criminal behavior. Inadequately trained, many are unemployed. Some aimlessly squander their lives. Millions have become the "flotsam and jetsam" of society, washed upon the shore by oceans of neglect, abuse, and frustration, helpless to correct their circumstances. *Time* magazine, discussing the problems of New York City, stated that the most serious is the breakdown of the family. Sixty percent of those in New York City public schools, totalling some 600,000, come from one-parent homes. Comparable studies would doubtless bring forth similar statistics for other large cities in America and most of the large cities of the world.

We are building and maintaining more prisons than we can afford. The costs are enormous, almost beyond comprehension.

In an alarming percentage of the cases of those who are warehoused in these facilities, there will be found in their background a broken home where a father abandoned his family and a mother struggled in vain to handle the overpowering odds against her.

Selfishness a major cause of divorce

Why all of these broken homes? What happens to marriages that begin with sincere love and a desire to be loyal and faithful and true one to another?

There is no simple answer. I acknowledge that. But it appears to me

that there are some obvious reasons that account for a very high percentage of these problems. I say this out of experience in dealing with such tragedies. I find selfishness to be the root cause of most of it.

I am satisfied that a happy marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one's companion.

Selfishness so often is the basis of money problems, which are a very serious and real factor affecting the stability of family life. Selfishness is at the root of adultery, the breaking of solemn and sacred covenants to satisfy selfish lust. Selfishness is the antithesis of love. It is a cankering expression of greed. It destroys self-discipline. It obliterates loyalty. It tears up sacred covenants. It afflicts both men and women.

Too many who come to marriage have been coddled and spoiled and somehow led to feel that everything must be precisely right at all times, that life is a series of entertainments, that appetites are to be satisfied without regard to principle. How tragic the consequences of such hollow and unreasonable thinking!

A burdened single mother

Bitter consequences are seen in the lives of children who need but do not have a father who loves them, teaches them, protects them, and leads them along the path of life by example and precept. Let me recount for you something I heard about two years ago in this tabernacle. The occasion was a great gathering of single men and women. Elder Marion D. Hanks conducted a panel discussion. Included in that panel was an attractive and able young woman, divorced, the mother of seven children then ranging in ages from five to sixteen. She said that one

evening she went across the street to deliver something to a neighbor. Listen to her words as I recall them:

"As I turned around to walk back home, I could see my house lighted up. I could hear echoes of my children as I had walked out of the door a few minutes earlier: 'Mom, what are we going to have for dinner?' 'Can you take me to the library?' 'I have to get some poster paper tonight.' Tired and weary, I looked at that house and saw the light on in each of the rooms. I thought of all of those children who were home waiting for me to come and meet their needs. My burdens felt very heavy on my shoulders.

"I remember looking through tears toward the sky, and I said, 'O my Father, I just can't do it tonight. I'm too tired. I can't face it. I can't go home and take care of all those children alone. Could I just come to You and stay with You for just one night? I'll come back in the morning.'

"I didn't really hear the words of reply, but I heard them in my mind. The answer was, 'No, little one, you can't come to me now. You would never wish to come back. But I can come to you.'"

There are so many, so very, very many like that young mother. She recognizes a divine power available to her. She is fortunate enough to have some around to love her and help her, but very many do not have such help. In loneliness and desperation, watching their children drift toward drugs and crime and helpless to stop that drift, they weep and pray.

The Golden Rule is the remedy

There is a remedy for all of this. It is not found in divorce. It is found in the gospel of the Son of God. He it was who said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). The remedy for

most marriage stress is not in divorce. It is in repentance. It is not in separation. It is in simple integrity that leads a man to square up his shoulders and meet his obligations. It is found in the Golden Rule.

Marriage is beautiful when beauty is looked for and cultivated. It can be ugly and uncomfortable when one is looking for faults and is blinded to virtue. As Edgar A. Guest once remarked, "It takes a heap o' livin' in a house t' make it home" ("Home," in *Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest* [Chicago: Reilly and Lee Co., 1934], p. 12). That is true. I can show you throughout this church hundreds of thousands of families who make it work with love and peace, discipline and honesty, concern and unselfishness.

There must be recognition on the part of both husband and wife of the solemnity and sanctity of marriage and of the God-given design behind it.

There must be a willingness to overlook small faults, to forgive, and then to forget.

There must be a holding of one's tongue. Temper is a vicious and corrosive thing that destroys affection and casts out love.

There must be self-discipline that constrains against abuse of wife and children and self. There must be the Spirit of God, invited and worked for, nurtured and strengthened. There must be recognition of the fact that each is a child of God—father, mother, son, and daughter, each with a divine birthright—and also recognition of the fact that when we offend one of these, we offend our Father in Heaven.

Resist Satan's entreaties

There may be now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified. But I say without hesitation that this plague among us, which seems to be growing

everywhere, is not of God, but rather is the work of the adversary of righteousness and peace and truth.

(Due to time constraints, the remainder of this talk was not given from the pulpit. President Hinckley has asked that it be included in the Conference Report.)

You need not be his victims. You can rise above his wiles and entreaties. Get rid of the titillating entertainment, the pornography that leads to evil desires and reprehensible activity. Wives, look upon your husbands as your precious companions and live worthy of that association. Husbands, see in your wives your most valued asset in time or eternity, each a daughter of God, a partner with whom you can walk hand in hand, through sunshine and storm, through all the perils and triumphs of life. Parents, see in your children sons and daughters of your Father in Heaven, who will hold you accountable for them. Stand together as their guardians, their protectors, their guides, their anchors.

God is the designer of the family

The strength of the nations lies in the homes of the people. God is the designer of the family. He intended that the greatest of happiness, the most satisfying aspects of life, the deepest joys should come in our associations together and our concerns one for another as fathers and mothers and children.

God bless the homes of our people. May He bless those homes that there may be loyal and true fathers, and good and wonderful mothers, and obedient and ambitious children reared in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Enos 1:1), I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Help Me Teach with Inspiration."

Bishop Robert D. Hales offered the benediction.

SECOND DAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 161st Annual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 7, 1991. President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and Robert Cundick at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began:

President Thomas S. Monson

Brothers and sisters, we welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 161st Annual General Conference of The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To those in the Assembly Hall, we note that Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Carlos E. Asay, and George R. Hill III are seated on the stand.

We also send our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley and accompanied by Robert Cundick, will provide the music for this session. The choir will begin this service by singing "Praise Ye the Lord," and the invocation will then