

President Monson

Thank you, Elder Carmack, for that beautiful and touching prayer.

Our first speaker at this session of the conference will be Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder James E. Faust

I come before you, my brothers, sisters, and friends, with the sincere hope that you will extend to me your faith and prayers as I humbly seek in the next few minutes to acknowledge the hand of the Lord our God in our lives. I extend to Sister Norma Ashton our love and prayers in the passing of our beloved associate, Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Five loaves and two fishes

Some months ago, as Elder Spencer J. Condie and I were in the Salt Lake airport, we unexpectedly met a devoted and faithful couple who have been friends for long years. This couple has spent a lifetime of service, meekly, faithfully, and effectively trying to build up the Church in many places in the world. Elder Condie noted, "Isn't it remarkable what people with five loaves and two fishes do to build up the kingdom of God?" This kind of quiet, devoted service is surely a fulfillment of the word of God "that the fullness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers" (D&C 1:23). Today I would like to speak of those of us who have only talents equal to five loaves and two fishes to offer the Savior to help feed the multitudes.

"When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

"And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:5-6).

Philip answered quickly that there was not enough money to buy bread for the multitude. Then Andrew, Peter's brother, said, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes" (v. 9).

"And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.

"And they did all eat, and were filled.

"And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.

"And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men" (Mark 6:41-44).

Subsequently their hearts were hardened in that they forgot the divine mission of Jesus, "for they considered not the miracle of the loaves" (v. 52).

We have forgotten the miracle

In our time, we seem to have forgotten the miracle of the five loaves and the two fishes in favor of the miracles wrought by the mind and hand of men. I refer to the marvels of modern transportation and the increasing sophistication of all scientific knowledge, including the new electronic highway. We have forgotten that this amazing knowledge comes to mankind only as God chooses to reveal it, and it should be used for purposes nobler and wiser than mere entertainment. This knowledge permits the words of the prophets of God to be bounced off satellites hovering over the earth so it is possible

for much of mankind to hear their messages.

With this great knowledge has come also some skepticism about the simple and profound eternal truths taught in the miracle of the loaves and of the fishes—namely, that God rules in the heavens and the earth through his infinite intelligence and goodness.

God has fed us in our time

We are also to understand and remember that we too, like the lad in the New Testament account, are the spirit children of our Heavenly Father and that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior, and the Redeemer of the world. We believe that in the centuries following the establishment of his kingdom upon the earth, the doctrines and the ordinances were changed, resulting in a falling away and the loss of the keys of priesthood authority from the earth. A miracle even greater than that of the loaves and the fishes was the vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who saw the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove near Palmyra, New York. Subsequently the keys, the priesthood, and the saving ordinances were restored in their fulness, and Christ's church was reestablished in our time. Thus God has again "fed" us and filled our "baskets" to overflowing.

Service of members with few talents

It has been said that this church does not necessarily attract great people but more often makes ordinary people great. Many nameless people with gifts equal only to five loaves and two small fishes magnify their callings and serve without attention or recognition, feeding literally thousands. In large measure, they make possible the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that the latter-day gospel of Christ would be like a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, rolling forth until it fills the

whole earth (see Daniel 2:34–35; D&C 65:2). These are the hundreds of thousands of leaders and teachers in all of the auxiliaries and priesthood quorums, the home teachers, the Relief Society visiting teachers. These are the many humble bishops in the Church, some without formal training but greatly magnified, always learning, with a humble desire to serve the Lord and the people of their wards.

Any man or woman who enjoys the Master's touch is like potter's clay in his hands. More important than acquiring fame or fortune is being what God wants us to be. Before we came to this earth, we may have been fashioned to do some small good in this life that no one else can do. The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). If God has a work for those with many talents, I believe he also has an important work for those of us who have few.

Ego and pride prevent service

What is the central characteristic of those having only five loaves and two fishes? What makes it possible, under the Master's touch, for them to serve, lift, and bless so that they touch for good the lives of hundreds, even thousands? After a lifetime of dealing in the affairs of men and women, I believe it is the ability to overcome personal ego and pride—both are enemies to the full enjoyment of the Spirit of God and to walking humbly before him. The ego interferes with husbands and wives asking each other for forgiveness. It prevents the enjoyment of the full sweetness of a higher love. The ego often prevents parents and children from fully understanding each other. The ego enlarges our feelings of self-importance and worth. It blinds us to reality. Pride

keeps us from confessing our sins and shortcomings to the Lord and working out our repentance.

What of those who have talents equal only to two loaves and one fish? They do much of the hard, menial, unchallenging, poorly compensated work of the world. Life may not have been quite fair to them. They struggle to have enough to hold body and soul together. But they are not forgotten. If their talents are used to build the kingdom of God and serve others, they will fully enjoy the promises of the Savior. The great promise of the Savior is that they "shall receive [their] reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come" (D&C 59:23). The one who had only two talents was able to say, "Lord, thou deliverdst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them." Thus said the Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter . . . into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:22-23).

It is a blessing for some to be given minds and talents equal to fifteen loaves and ten fishes. They have so very much that they can contribute, but some become less than they might. They do not reach their potential of service, perhaps because they take so much pride in what they think they know and what they have. They seem unwilling or unable to yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit . . . and [become] as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [them], even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19).

Humble members strengthen the Church

During much of my life, a few journalists and dissidents have predicted the imminent downfall of this church. They have often pointed to the alleged

disaffection of the youth of the Church. The lives and the dedication of our almost 50,000 young missionaries are testament enough of the faithfulness of many of our youth. In addition, during my lifetime, the Church has grown from 525,000 to about 8,500,000. I believe and testify that this is because of the restoration of the fulness of the keys and authority of the gospel of Christ to Joseph Smith.

Recently an out-of-state journalist used the phrase that there were appearing "cracks in the walls of the temple," figuratively speaking, of course. By this I suppose he meant that the moorings of the Church were being shaken by a very few who do not fully sustain the leaders of the Church or keep their covenants. To dispel this perception of cracks in our members' faith, we need only to observe the joyful people who worship in any of our forty-five temples worldwide. Many are couples clutching their little bags and holding hands, and many are the unmarried, seeking the peaceful blessings of the house of the Lord. Their countenances reflect much joy and satisfaction in their lives.

A major reason this church has grown from its humble beginnings to its current strength is the faithfulness and devotion of millions of humble and devoted people who have only five loaves and two small fishes to offer in the service of the Master. They have largely surrendered their own interests and in so doing have found "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). I wish only to be one of those who experience this supernal inner peace.

Effects of Jeralee Underwood's life

In the listening audience today are Jeff and Joyce Underwood of Pocatello, Idaho. They are parents of Jeralee and their other five children. Jeff works on a building maintenance team that cares

for some of our chapels in Pocatello, Idaho. Joyce is a mother and homemaker. One day last July, their daughter Jeralee, age eleven, was going door to door collecting money for her newspaper route. Jeralee never returned home—not that day, nor the next day, nor the next, nor ever.

Two thousand people from the area had gone out day after day to search for her. Other churches sent support and food for the searchers. It was learned that Jeralee had been abducted and brutally murdered by an evil man. When her body was found, the whole city was horrified and shocked. All segments of the community reached out to Joyce and Jeff in love and sympathy. Some became angry and wanted to take vengeance.

After Jeralee's body was found, Jeff and Joyce appeared with great composure before the television cameras and other media to publicly express their profound thanks to all who had helped in the search and who had extended sympathy and love. Joyce said, "I know our Heavenly Father has heard and answered our prayers, and he has brought our daughter back to us." Jeff said, "We no longer have doubt about where she is." Joyce continued, "I have learned a lot about love this week, and I also know there is a lot of hate. I have looked at the love and want to feel that love, and not the hate. We can forgive."

Elder Joe J. Christensen and I, representing the General Authorities, were among the thousands privileged to attend Jeralee's funeral service. The Holy Spirit blessed that gathering in a remarkable way and spoke peace to the souls of all who attended. Later, President Kert W. Howard, Jeralee's stake president, wrote, "The Underwoods have received letters from people both in and out of

the Church stating that they prayed for Jeralee, and they hadn't prayed in years, and because of this, they had a renewed desire to return to the Church." President Howard continued, "We will never know the extent of activation and rededication this single event has caused. Who knows the far-reaching effects Jeralee's life will have for generations untold?" Many have come into the Church because they wanted to know what kind of a religion could give the Underwoods their spiritual strength.

I mention the good coming from this tragic event with Jeralee's parents' full approval and encouragement. Their sweet daughter was like the lad who had only five barley loaves and two small fishes to give to the cause of the Savior, but by the power of God, countless thousands have been spiritually fed.

I testify that the gospel we teach is the "power of God unto salvation" for all who listen and obey (Romans 1:16), regardless of their talents and abilities, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

President Monson

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us and touched our hearts with that poignant and inspiring address. He was followed by the Relief Society Choir singing the matchless number, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.