

## SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth general session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 6, 1996. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and Richard Elliott at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you this beautiful autumn Sabbath morning from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City to the fourth general session of the 166th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the large audience assembled in the Tabernacle; in the overflow gathering in the nearby Assembly Hall, where Elders Jeffrey R. Holland, Spencer J. Condie, and W. Don Ladd are seated on the stand; and in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, where Elders Gene R. Cook, Alexander B. Morrison, Neil L. Andersen, and C. Max Caldwell are in attendance.

We 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 these various facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders; those of other faiths who honor us with their presence; and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Richard Elliott at the organ, opened these services by singing "Praise to the Lord."

The choir will now sing "Our Savior's Love," following which Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy will offer the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Wickman.

We shall now be pleased to listen to President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

## President James E. Faust

### To those with heartrending challenges

My dear brothers and sisters and friends, the responsibility of speaking to you today prompts me to earnestly ask for your faith and prayers. Today I speak to those who have heartrending challenges. I speak to those who suffer, to those who mourn and have heartaches. I speak to those with physical, mental, or emotional pain. I speak to those born

crippled or who have become crippled. I speak to those who were born blind or who can no longer see the sunsets. I speak to those who have never been able or who are no longer able to hear a bird sing. I speak to those who have the privileged responsibility of helping others who have mental and physical disabilities. I also speak to those who may be in serious transgression.

I take as my text the words of the Savior to the sorrowing Mary Magdalene, who “stood without at the sepulchre weeping.”<sup>1</sup> As she turned around, she “saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?”<sup>2</sup>

The Savior was speaking not just to the sorrowing Mary. He was also speaking to us—men, women, and children and all of mankind ever born or yet to be born, for the tears of sorrow, pain, or remorse are the common lot of mankind.

The complexities of this life at times tend to be very dehumanizing and overwhelming. Some have so much, while others struggle with so very little.

It is a joy to meet with the faithful Saints of the Church all over the world. Even though some of them have difficulties and challenges and lack material wealth, they seem to find much happiness and are able to walk in faith over the rough cobblestones of life. Their deep faith strengthens ours as we meet with them.

### Healing power of the Atonement

Many who think that life is unfair do not see things within the larger vision of what the Savior did for us through the Atonement and the Resurrection. Each of us has at times agony, heartbreak, and despair when we must, like Job, reach deep down inside to the bedrock of our own faith. The depth of our belief in the Resurrection and the Atonement of the Savior will, I believe, determine the measure of courage and purpose with which we meet life's challenges.

The first words of the risen Lord to His disciples were, “Peace be unto you.”<sup>3</sup> He has also promised “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”<sup>4</sup> The Atonement and the Resurrection have taken place. Our Lord and Savior suffered that appalling agony in

Gethsemane. He performed the ultimate sacrifice in dying on the cross and then breaking the bonds of death.

All of us benefit from the transcendent blessings of the Atonement and the Resurrection, through which the divine healing process can work in our lives. The hurt can be replaced by the joy the Savior promised. To the doubting Thomas, Jesus said, “Be not faithless, but believing.”<sup>5</sup> Through faith and righteousness, all of the inequities, injuries, and pains of this life can be fully compensated for and made right. Blessings denied in this life will be fully recompensed in the eternities. Through complete repentance of our sins, we can be forgiven and we can enjoy eternal life. Thus our suffering in this life can be as the refining fire, purifying us for a higher purpose. Heartaches can be healed, and we can come to know a soul-satisfying joy and happiness beyond our dreams and expectations.

The resolution promised by the Atonement and the Resurrection continues in eternity. Physical limitations will be compensated. Alma's words are comforting: “The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.”<sup>6</sup>

The resolution is brought about by the Savior's intercession. As He said in the great intercessory prayer found in the 17th chapter of John, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”<sup>7</sup> Then the Savior prayed for His Apostles and all of the Saints, saying:

“I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

“And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.”<sup>8</sup>

### The healing process of repentance

All of us have made wrong turns along the way. I believe the kind and merciful God, whose children we are, will judge us as lightly as He can for the wrongs that we have done and give us the maximum blessing for the good that we do. Alma's sublime utterance seems to me an affirmation of this. Said Alma, "And not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers."<sup>9</sup>

Of vital importance is resolving transgression, experiencing the healing process which comes of repentance. As President Kimball reminds us:

"The principle of repentance—of rising again whenever we fall, brushing ourselves off, and setting off again on that upward trail—is the basis for our hope. It is through repentance that the Lord Jesus Christ can work his healing miracle, infusing us with strength when we are weak, health when we are sick, hope when we are downhearted, love when we feel empty, and understanding when we search for truth."<sup>10</sup>

One of the tender stories of the Book of Mormon takes place when Alma speaks to his son Corianton, who has fallen into transgression while on a mission to the Zoramites. As Alma counsels him to forsake his sin and turn again to the Lord, he learns that Corianton is worried about what will happen to him in the Resurrection. There follows a detailed treatment of the probationary state of this life, of justice versus mercy, and God's plan for our happiness in the hereafter, culminating in this verse:

"And mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back

men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice."<sup>11</sup>

### Stay free from evil

The Savior gives us a profound key by which we can cope with and even surmount the debilitating forces of the world. Said the Savior, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil."<sup>12</sup> This grand key, then, is that regardless of the saturation of wickedness around us, we must stay free from the evil of the world. The Savior's prayer both commands us to avoid evil and proffers divine help to do so. Through this effort, we become one with our Lord. The prayer of the Savior in Gethsemane was "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."<sup>13</sup>

To remain true and faithful through this mortal vale of tears, we must love God with all our heart, might, mind, and strength and love our neighbor as ourselves. We must also stand together as families; as members of wards and branches, stakes and districts; and as a people. To our neighbors not of our faith, we should be as the good Samaritan who cared for the man who fell among thieves.<sup>14</sup> We must gather strength from each other. We must also "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees."<sup>15</sup>

Paul taught well on this subject. Said he to the Corinthians, speaking of the body, or the Church, of Christ:

"There should be no schism in the body; but . . . the members should have the same care one for another.

"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."<sup>16</sup>

In this way, as individuals and as a people we may be kept from evil. As we go through travail and difficulty, we may feel sorry for ourselves and despair; but with the love of God and with the Saints unitedly bearing each other's burdens, we can be happy and overcome evil.

### **The Savior values womanhood**

Some faithful women have been denied that which is at the very center of their souls. In the eternal plan, no blessing will be kept from the faithful. No woman should question how the Savior values womanhood. The grieving Mary Magdalene was the first to visit the sepulchre after the Crucifixion, and when she saw that the stone had been rolled away and that the tomb was empty, she ran to tell Peter and John. The two Apostles came to see and then went away sorrowing. But Mary stayed. She had stood near the cross.<sup>17</sup> She had been at the burial.<sup>18</sup> And now she stood weeping by the empty sepulchre.<sup>19</sup> There she was honored to be the first mortal to see the risen Lord. After He said, "Woman, why weepest thou?" she was instructed by Him, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."<sup>20</sup>

### **Jesus teaches the woman at the well**

During His mortal ministry, Jesus left Judea to go to Galilee. He arrived at Jacob's well thirsty and weary from traveling. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jewish convention at the time forbade dealings with Samaritans. Yet "Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. . . .

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? . . .

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."

Jesus went on to teach her about the living water "springing up into everlasting life." The Samaritan woman responded, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." Then she "saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." At this point Jesus revealed His true identity to her: "I that speak unto thee am he."<sup>21</sup>

### **Elizabeth Jackson's enduring faith**

The Resurrection and the Atonement of the Savior can be a constant fortifying influence in our lives as illustrated by the account of Elizabeth Jackson, a pioneer in the Martin Handcart Company. She tells of the death of her husband, Aaron, on the Wyoming plains in 1856 in these moving words:

"About nine o'clock I retired. Bedding had become very scarce so I did not disrobe. I slept until, as it appeared to me, about midnight. I was extremely cold. The weather was bitter. I listened to hear if my husband breathed, he lay so still. I could not hear him. I became alarmed. I put my hand on his body, when to my horror I discovered that my worst fears were confirmed. My husband was dead. I called for help to the other inmates of the tent. They could render me no aid; and there was no alternative but to remain alone by the side of the corpse till morning. Oh, how the dreary hours drew their tedious length along. When daylight came, some of the male part of the company prepared the body for burial. And oh, such a burial and funeral service. They did not remove his clothing—he had but little. They wrapped him in a blanket and placed him in a pile with thirteen others who

had died, and then covered him up with snow. The ground was frozen so hard that they could not dig a grave. He was left there to sleep in peace until the trump of God shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall awake and come forth in the morning of the first resurrection. We shall then again unite our hearts and lives, and eternity will furnish us with life forever more."<sup>22</sup>

### Savior's sacrifice will wipe away tears

To the question "Woman, why weep-est thou?" we turn to the comforting words written to the faithful Saints by John in the book of Revelation:

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."<sup>23</sup>

To the question "Woman, why weep-est thou?" I testify of the great atoning sacrifice and breaking of the bonds of death by the Lord Jesus Christ, which shall indeed wipe away our tears. I have a witness of this. It has been given by the Holy Spirit of God.

I also testify that the Lord Jesus Christ is the head of this Church today. We see His omnipotent hand guiding this holy work. I further testify to the prophetic calling and great leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley as His servant under whose inspired direction we are all privileged to serve. President

Monson and our beloved associates are witnesses of this.

### "Be steadfast and immovable"

I pray, as did King Benjamin, that we shall "be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal [us] his, that [we] may be brought to heaven, that [we] may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all."<sup>24</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. John 20:11.
2. John 20:14-15.
3. John 20:19.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
5. John 20:27.
6. Alma 40:23.
7. John 17:3.
8. John 17:9-10.
9. Alma 9:26.
10. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (1982), 106.
11. Alma 42:23.
12. John 17:15.
13. John 17:21.
14. See Luke 10:29-37.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
16. 1 Corinthians 12:25-27.
17. See Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25.
18. See Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47.
19. See John 20:11.
20. John 20:17.
21. See John 4:6-26.
22. Quoted in LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion* (1976), 111.
23. Revelation 7:14-17.
24. Mosiah 5:15.

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The choir sang "Come, Ye Children of the Lord."

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