

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in our own little family plots, we can bequeath to the succeeding generations "clean earth to till"! Thus not only does charity begin at home, but so does hope!

Whatever our particular furrow, we can, in Paul's words, "plow in hope," not looking back, and refusing to let yesterday hold tomorrow hostage (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Genuine, ultimate hope helps us to be more loving even while the love of many waxes cold (see Matthew 24:12). We are to be more holy, even as the world ripens in iniquity; to be more courteous and patient in a coarsening and curt world; and to be of strong hearts even when the hearts of others fail them (see Moroni 10:22).

Reach out with hope

Hope can be contagious, especially if we are to be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason of the hope that is in [us]" (1 Peter 3:15). Said President Brigham Young, if we do not impart knowledge to others and do good, we "will become contracted in [our] views and feelings" (*Deseret News*, 9 May 1855, 68).

If we look for specific things we can do, the Holy Ghost will direct us, showing unto us "all things" which we should do, for this is one of His inspiring roles

(2 Nephi 32:5). Our opportunities for helping others who have lost hope may be no further away than in our own extended families, a discouraged neighbor next door, or someone just around the corner. By helping a child learn to read, visiting a lonely patient in a nursing home, or simply running an errand for a busy but overwhelmed parent, so much can be imparted to others. Likewise, a simple gospel conversation can impart hope. Meanwhile, never mind that the world will become more bipolar as between those who are secular and permissive and those who hold to spiritual values.

Therefore, being blessed with hope ourselves, let us, as disciples, rather than being contracted, reach out, including to those who, for whatever reason, have "moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:23).

As in Charles Wesley's words in the hymn "Come, Let Us Anew," our lives and times do glide swiftly away, and our glide paths vary widely, as we all know. But all those who prevail "by the patience of hope and the labor of love" will hear the glorious words "Well and faithfully done; Enter into my joy and sit down on my throne" (*Hymns*, no. 217).

May this glorious moment one day be ours to claim, through the gospel of hope—in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder David E. Sorensen

Elder Maxwell, you are a great treasure to the Church and a blessing to the world at large. May God bless you and keep you.

Brothers and sisters, it is a daunting experience to stand before you. When I was growing up, my family lived on a cattle ranch in south-central Utah, and I spent a lot of time in a saddle rounding up and caring for the cattle. I must confess there is a part of me right now that

would be more comfortable dodging a charging bull than speaking here today. However, I know I am among friends, and I believe with all my heart in the importance of the work we are doing.

This Church will fill the world

In the early days of the Church when there were just a few members, the Prophet Joseph Smith said to a group of

men: "You know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it. . . . It is only a little handfull of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world" (quoted by Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 57). We are beginning to see a partial fulfillment of that prophecy.

Hastening of temple building

As Church membership has grown around the world, so has the need for temples. President Hinckley said 13 years ago, "The sacred and important work that goes on in temples must be accelerated, and for this to happen, it is necessary that temples be taken closer to the people rather than having the people travel so far to temples" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 54).

Let me share with you some numbers that show how far the Church has come in the effort to bring temples closer to the people:

In the year 1900, there were just four operating temples—all of them in the state of Utah.

In the next 50 years, from 1900 to 1950, four more temples were dedicated, for a total of eight. So in the first century, the Church built about one temple per decade.

In the 30 years between 1951 and 1980, another 11 temples were built, bringing the total to 19. This was a faster rate, but even still there were many members for whom a visit to a temple meant years of saving money and a long journey.

In the 1980s, the Church began a more intensive temple building effort; by 1997, 32 more temples had been dedicated, or about two per year.

The Church has now entered the most committed era of temple building in its history. In 1998, two temples have been dedicated, with 15 more under construction and an additional 26 temple sites being prepared for groundbreaking. These 43 temples, plus those currently operating, bring the total to 94.

This is an extraordinary blessing for us as members of the Church. The Old Testament describes some of the joy that comes from people building these holy places:

"And they sang together . . . in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord. . . . And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid" (Ezra 3:11; see also verses 10, 12–13).

Watching these new temples being built, I believe that we too will have occasion to praise the Lord and weep for joy.

Temples help us come to Christ

As we see the increased commitment President Hinckley and others have made to building new temples, we might pause and ask ourselves why temples are of such importance. Indeed, nonmembers of the Church may not even understand the distinction between our regular meetinghouses, of which there are many thousands, and these very special buildings we call temples.

President Hinckley explained the distinction this way: "These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53). In other words, temples are of great value to us because they help us express our core theology, that of coming to Christ.

Temples remind us of Christ

Temples do this in at least two ways. First, they symbolically and literally remind us and teach us about Christ and His Father. We know that Christ spent key parts of His ministry at the temple in Jerusalem (see John 7–8; Matthew 21–23; Mark 11–12; Luke 20) and drew frequently on temple symbolism in His teachings, often comparing Himself to symbols used in the temple, such as light and water (see, for example, John 7:38; 8:12). Our temple worship today includes many symbolic references to Christ, from the spires on the outside that point our minds heavenward, to the white clothing we wear inside the temple to symbolize that, as the book of Revelation says, we have come “out of great tribulation, and have washed [our] robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14).

Temples stand as a constant physical reminder of the grace and the goodness of the Father. This helps communities of Saints strengthen themselves. President George Q. Cannon said, “Every foundation stone that is laid for a temple, and every temple completed . . . lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the power of God and Godliness” (Logan Temple cornerstone ceremony, 19 Sept. 1877; quoted in Nolan Porter Olsen, *Logan Temple: The First 100 Years* [1978], 34).

Temples have always symbolized being in the presence of the Lord. “Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them,” said the Lord. “And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee” (Exodus 25:8, 22). There is a closeness to God that comes through consistent worship in the house of the Lord. We can come to know Him and feel welcome, “at home,” in His house.

With temples in so many places around the world, more of us will have them nearby to remind us of Christ and

His sacrifice for us. The simple presence of a temple should serve as a reminder of covenants we have made, the need for integrity, and the fact that God is never far away.

Ordinances are centered in Christ

Beyond their physical presence and outward symbolism, temples can inspire us to come unto Christ in a second way—that is, by the ordinances we perform in them. All temple ordinances are centered in Jesus Christ and His divine mission, and they are performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Doctrine and Covenants 84 says, “And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh” (D&C 84:21). Each ordinance is calculated to reveal to us something about Christ and our relationship to God.

While some ordinances in the temple seem easy to understand, such as eternal marriage, others require careful and lengthy spiritual preparation before their full impact becomes clear to us. In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul described the need to have the Spirit of God with us in order to understand the things of God: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12; see also verses 11, 14). As the Spirit of God helps us understand and know His plan for us, we will find not only greater knowledge but also a greater measure of peace and compassion.

Temple ordinances also provide an opportunity to strengthen our families, something so much needed today. Strength can be provided through performing ordinances vicariously for our ancestors, thus forming a “welding link” between parents and children (D&C 128:18). For example, in the temple we

can be baptized vicariously for our ancestors who may not have had a chance to hear the gospel during their mortal lives (see 1 Corinthians 15:29).

In Japan I witnessed a 21-year-old man accept the gospel. After baptism, he was the only member of the Church in his family. He completed the family history work for his deceased grandfather so he could perform ordinance work vicariously for him, literally doing something for his grandfather that his grandfather could no longer do for himself. As this young man came up out of the baptismal font, he had tears in his eyes. He said, "Now I know and feel, I have a witness, that I am not the only member of this Church in my family." These ordinances strengthened his relationship with his family and brought a new closeness into his life.

The gates of heaven are open

At the dedication of the Manti Temple, Elder Lorenzo Snow prayed, "May this holy Temple be to them as one of the gates of heaven, opening into the straight and narrow path that leads to endless

lives and eternal dominion" (quoted in N. B. Lundwall, comp., *Temples of the Most High* [1941], 111).

Brothers and sisters, the gates of heaven are open to us, and the Lord Jesus Christ is inviting us to come unto Him, I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "My Redeemer Lives."

President Hinckley

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Twelve and Elder David E. Sorensen of the Seventy have just spoken to us. The choir then sang "My Redeemer Lives."

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Following the singing, Sister Susan L. Warner, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

Sister Susan L. Warner

All things bear record of Him

Because our Heavenly Father wants us to know Him and to feel His love, He planned a world filled with magnificent creations that bear record of Him and His Son, Jesus Christ. Have you ever counted all the things that bear record of the Savior? There are sunsets and seashells, lilacs and lakes, insects and animals, miraculous mornings and star-strewn skies.

The Lord Himself told Adam, "All things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are tempo-

ral, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: *all things bear record of me*" (Moses 6:63; italics added).

Wherever we live in this world, we see the glorious rising sun, which bears record of the Light of Christ that fills our hearts and enlightens our minds. The mighty rivers and the meandering streams bear record that the Savior is the source of the living water that can quench our thirst for spiritual things.