

President Boyd K. Packer

Focus on the builder, not the building

Do you think it possible for those of us who are called upon to speak to draw attention away from this wonderful building long enough to focus on the purpose for which it was built?

Perhaps it can be done with a parable and a poem.

The parable: A merchant man seeking precious jewels found at last the perfect pearl. He had the finest craftsman carve a superb jewel box and line it with blue velvet. He put his pearl of great price on display so others could share his treasure. He watched as people came to see it. Soon he turned away in sorrow. It was the box they admired, not the pearl.

The poem:

We are all blind, until we see
That in the [universal] plan
Nothing is worth the making if
It does not make the man.

Why build these [buildings] glorious,
If man unbuilted goes?
In vain we build the [world], unless
The builder also grows.¹

Jesus is baptized and tempted

In thinking of the builder, we begin half a world away and two millennia ago on the river Jordan with John the Baptist. He preached, "I . . . baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I . . . : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."²

"Then [came] Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him."³

"[When Jesus came] up . . . out of the water . . . , the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God [the Holy Ghost] descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."⁴

Jesus then went into the wilderness; Lucifer came tempting Him.⁵ Jesus deflected each temptation with scripture:

"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone."⁶

"It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."⁷

"It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."⁸

Think on it carefully. When facing Perdition himself, the Lord drew upon scriptures for protection.

The promise to send the Comforter

Jesus chose from among His disciples twelve whom He ordained Apostles: Peter, James, and John; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Simon, James, Jude, and Judas. They were ordinary men described by the Pharisees as "unlearned and ignorant."⁹

The Twelve followed Him. He taught them.

He commanded them to teach all nations, baptizing all who would believe.¹⁰

Before He left, He promised, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."¹¹

Jesus was crucified. On the third day He rose from the tomb. He gave further instruction to His Apostles; and then, before He ascended, He said, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be [endowed] with power from on high."¹²

That power was not long in coming. On the day of Pentecost, the Twelve were assembled in a house:

"Suddenly there came a sound . . . of a rushing mighty wind. . . .

"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."¹³

With that the Twelve were fully empowered.

When they spoke that day, the people marveled, for each heard it in his own language—18 different languages.¹⁴

Conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost

The Apostles set out to baptize all who would believe on their words. But baptism unto repentance was not enough.¹⁵

Paul found twelve men who had already been baptized by John the Baptist and asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" They replied, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."¹⁶

"They were [then] baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,"¹⁷ and "Paul . . . laid his hands upon them, [and] the Holy Ghost came on them."¹⁸

The pattern was set, as it had been from the beginning.¹⁹ Entrance into the Church of Jesus Christ is through "baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."²⁰ Then, in a separate ordinance, the priceless gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred "by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances."²¹

Authority to confer the gift was lost

Despite opposition, the Twelve established the Church of Jesus Christ; and despite persecution, it flourished.

But as the centuries passed, the flame flickered and dimmed. Ordinances were changed or abandoned. The line was broken, and the authority to confer the Holy Ghost as a gift was gone. The Dark Ages of apostasy settled over the world.

But always, as it had from the beginning, the Spirit of God inspired worthy souls.²²

We owe an immense debt to the protesters and the reformers who preserved the scriptures and translated them. They knew something had been lost. They kept the flame alive as best they could. Many of them were martyrs. But protesting was not enough; nor could reformers restore that which was gone.

In time, a great diversity of churches arose.

Authority to confer the gift was restored

When all was prepared, the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph in the Grove, and those words spoken at the river Jordan were heard once again: "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"²³

Joseph Smith became the instrument of the Restoration.

John the Baptist restored "the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins."²⁴

Peter, James, and John restored the office of Apostle with the higher priesthood. With it came authority to confer the supernally precious gift of the Holy Ghost.²⁵

On April 6, 1830, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. The Brethren set about to teach and to baptize. Nine months later came a correction, a revelation:

"Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost;

"But now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old."²⁶

One month later that commandment was repeated: "On as many as ye shall baptize with water, ye shall lay your hands,

and they shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."²⁷

The gift is to all who repent and are baptized—boys and girls alike, women and men the same.

The Holy Ghost will show us what to do

We live in troubled times—very troubled times. We hope, we pray for better days. But that is not to be. The prophecies tell us that. We will not as a people, as families, or as individuals be exempt from the trials to come. No one will be spared the trials common to home and family, work, disappointment, grief, health, aging, ultimately death.

What then shall we do? That question was asked of the Twelve on the day of Pentecost. Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."²⁸

He told them, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off."²⁹

That same question—"What shall we do?"—was asked of the prophet Nephi. He gave the same answer that Peter had given: "Take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism . . . , then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost."³⁰

"Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? . . .

"Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

"Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, but must perish in the dark.

"For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do."³¹

We need not live in fear of the future. We have every reason to rejoice and little reason to fear. If we follow the promptings of the Spirit, we will be safe, whatever the future holds. We will be shown what to do.

We are too often inattentive to the Spirit

Christ promised that "the Father [would send] another Comforter, . . . even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."³²

Too many of us are like those whom the Lord said "[came] with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, . . . [and] at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not."³³

Imagine that: "And they knew it not." It is not unusual for one to have received the gift and not really know it.

I fear this supernal gift is being obscured by programs and activities and schedules and so many meetings. There are so many places to go, so many things to do in this noisy world. We can be too busy to pay attention to the promptings of the Spirit.

The voice of the Spirit is a still, small voice—a voice that is *felt* rather than heard. It is a spiritual voice that comes into the mind as a thought put into your heart.

Cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost

All over the world ordinary men, women, and children, not completely aware that they have the gift, bless their families, teach, preach, and minister by the Spirit within them.

In every language, the Spirit of God—the Holy Ghost—guides, or can guide, every member of the Church. Everyone is invited to come and repent and be baptized and receive of this sacred gift.

Despite opposition, the Church will flourish; and despite persecution, it will grow.

Joseph Smith was asked, "How does your religion differ from other religions?" He replied, "All other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost."³⁴

It is awakened with prayer and cultivated "by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."³⁵

It can be smothered through transgression and neglect.

And soon we learn that the tempter—the adversary—uses those same channels of the mind and heart to inspire us to evil, to laziness, to contention, even to acts of darkness. He can take over our thoughts and lead us to mischief.

But each of us has agency; ever and always light presides over darkness.

The priesthood is structured to ensure an unbroken line of authority to baptize and confer the Holy Ghost. Always nearby are leaders and teachers called and set apart to teach and to correct us. We can learn to sort out the promptings from the temptations and follow the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Holy Ghost guides, protects, comforts

It is a glorious time to live! No matter what trials await us, we can find the answer to that question, "What shall we do?" We, and those we love, will be guided and corrected and protected, and we will be comforted.

The Savior said: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."³⁶

As surely as I know that I am here and you are there, I know that Jesus is

the Christ. He lives! I know the gift of the Holy Ghost, a sacred spiritual power, can be a constant companion to every soul who will receive it. I pray that the witness of the Holy Ghost will confirm this testimony to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Edwin Markham, "Man-Making," in *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. James Dalton Morrison (1948), 419.
2. Matthew 3:11.
3. Matthew 3:13.
4. Matthew 3:16–17.
5. See Matthew 4:1–11.
6. Matthew 4:4.
7. Matthew 4:7.
8. Matthew 4:10.
9. Acts 4:13.
10. See Matthew 28:19.
11. John 14:26.
12. Luke 24:49.
13. Acts 2:2–4.
14. See Acts 2:7–11.
15. See Acts 2:38.
16. Acts 19:2; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 263, 336.
17. Acts 19:5.
18. Acts 19:6.
19. See Moses 6:64–66.
20. Articles of Faith 1:4.
21. Articles of Faith 1:5.
22. See 1 Nephi 10:17–19.
23. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 13.
25. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 35:5–6.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 39:23.
28. Acts 2:38.
29. Acts 2:39.
30. 2 Nephi 31:13.
31. 2 Nephi 32:2–5.
32. John 14:16–17.
33. 3 Nephi 9:20; italics added.
34. *History of the Church*, 4:42.
35. Articles of Faith 1:3.
36. John 14:27.