

Church satellite system immediately following this session and will also be carried over KSL and KBYU.

We're happy to have with us today Sister Inis Hunter, the widow of President Howard W. Hunter. We're so grateful for her presence.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### **Gratitude for unity of Church members**

Now it becomes my opportunity to say a few words, my brothers and sisters. I am overwhelmed with feelings of thanksgiving this morning. I feel so richly blessed of the Lord. As I look into the faces of the thousands upon thousands who are gathered in this new and beautiful hall and then think of the hundreds of thousands who are assembled across the world listening to this conference, I am almost overcome with feelings of gratitude for the great unity that exists among us. If I may speak personally for a little while, I think no man has been blessed so richly as I have been blessed. I cannot understand it. I so much appreciate your many expressions of kindness and love.

Through the great goodness of others I have traveled far and wide across the earth in the interest of this Church. I have had remarkable opportunities to speak to the world through the generosity of the media. I have lifted my voice in testimony in the great halls of this nation, from Madison Square Garden in New York to the Astrodome in Houston. Men and women of high station have received me and spoken with great respect concerning our work.

On the other hand, during these years I have come to know of the mean and contemptuous ways of our critics. I think the Lord had them in mind when He declared:

“Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, . . . but

have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them.

“. . . Those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves. . . .

“Wo unto them. . . .

“Their basket shall not be full, their houses and their barns shall perish, and they themselves shall be despised by those that flattered them” (D&C 121:16-17, 19-20).

We leave to Him, whose right it is, judgments that may come to those who oppose His work.

### **Gratitude for prayers and support**

I return to my expressions of gratitude. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your prayers. Thank you for your support in the great work we are all trying to accomplish. Thank you for your obedience to the commandments of God. He is pleased and loves you. Thank you for your faithfulness in carrying forward the great responsibilities which you have. Thank you for your ready response to every call which is made upon you. Thank you for bringing up your children in the way of light and truth. Thank you for the unflinching testimonies which you carry in your hearts concerning God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Gratitude for youth**

I am so grateful for the youth of the Church. There is so much of evil everywhere. Temptation, with all its titillating

influences, is about us everywhere. We lose some to these destructive forces, unfortunately. We sorrow over every one who is lost. We reach out to help them, to save them, but in too many cases our entreaties are spurned. Tragic is the course they are following. It is the way which leads down to destruction.

But there are so many, many hundreds of thousands of our young people who are faithful and true, who are straight as an arrow and as strong as a great wave of the sea in following the course they have mapped out for themselves. It is a course of righteousness and goodness, a course of accomplishment and achievement. They are making something of their lives, and the world will be so much the better for them.

I am profoundly grateful for this wonderful season of history in which we live. There has never been another like it. We, of all people who have walked the earth, are so richly and abundantly blessed.

### **Gratitude for a testimony of Christ**

But of all the things for which I feel grateful this morning, one stands out preeminently. That is a living testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Almighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One.

On one occasion at a missionary meeting in Europe, an elder raised his hand and said, "Give us your testimony and tell us how you gained it."

I feel I might try saying a few words this morning on the evolution of my testimony. This is a personal area, of course. I hope you will excuse that.

### **Early memories of spiritual feelings**

The earliest instance of which I have recollection of spiritual feelings was when I was about five years of age, a very small boy. I was crying from the pain of an ear-ache. There were no wonder drugs at the time. That was 85 years ago. My mother

prepared a bag of table salt and put it on the stove to warm. My father softly put his hands upon my head and gave me a blessing, rebuking the pain and the illness by authority of the holy priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ. He then took me tenderly in his arms and placed the bag of warm salt at my ear. The pain subsided and left. I fell asleep in my father's secure embrace. As I was falling asleep, the words of his administration floated through my mind. That is the earliest remembrance I have of the exercise of the authority of the priesthood in the name of the Lord.

Later in my youth, my brother and I slept in an unheated bedroom in the winter. People thought that was good for you. Before falling into a warm bed, we knelt to say our prayers. There were expressions of simple gratitude. They concluded in the name of Jesus. The distinctive title of Christ was not used very much when we prayed in those days.

I recall jumping into my bed after I had said *amen*, pulling the covers up around my neck, and thinking of what I had just done in speaking to my Father in Heaven in the name of His Son. I did not have great knowledge of the gospel. But there was some kind of lingering peace and security in communing with the heavens in and through the Lord Jesus.

### **Growth of testimony as a missionary**

When I went on a mission to the British Isles, that testimony quickened. Each morning my companion and I read the Gospel of John together, commenting on each verse. It was a wonderful, illuminating experience. That marvelous testament opens with a declaration of the divinity of the Son of God. It states:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God.

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . .

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-3, 14).

I thought of that declaration much then, and I have thought of it much since. It leaves no doubt concerning the individuality of the Father and the Son. To the Son the Father gave the great responsibility of creating the earth, "and without him was not any thing made that was made."

I have seen much of ugliness in this world. Most of it is the work of man. But I think I have seen much more of beauty. I marvel at the majestic works of the Creator. How magnificent they are. And they are all the work of the Son of God.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He, the Son of the Father, came to earth. He condescended to leave His royal courts on high—where He stood as Prince, the Firstborn of the Father—to take upon Himself mortality, to be born in a manger, the humblest of all places, in a vassal state ruled by the centurions of Rome.

How could He have condescended further?

He was baptized of John in Jordan "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). His earthly ministry was preceded by the clever temptations of the adversary. He withstood, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Luke 4:8).

He went about Galilee, Samaria, and Judea preaching the gospel of salvation, causing the blind to see, the lame to walk, the dead to rise to life again. And then, to fulfill His Father's plan of happiness for His children, He gave His life as a price for the sins of each of us.

That testimony grew in my heart as a missionary when I read the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, which

further bore witness of Him. That knowledge became the foundation of my life, standing on the footings of the answered prayers of my childhood.

### Apostolic witness of Christ

Since then my faith has grown much further. I have become His Apostle, appointed to do His will and teach His word. I have become His witness to the world. I repeat that witness of faith to you and to all who hear my voice this Sabbath morning.

*Jesus is my friend.* None other has given me so much. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He gave His life for me. He opened the way to eternal life. Only a God could do this. I hope that I am deemed worthy of being a friend to Him.

*He is my exemplar.* His way of life, His absolutely selfless conduct, His outreach to those in need, His final sacrifice all stand as an example to me. I cannot measure up entirely, but I can try.

He marked the path and led the way,  
And ev'ry point defines  
To light and life and endless day  
Where God's full presence shines.  
["How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *Hymns*, no. 195]

*He is my teacher.* No other voice ever spoke such wondrous language as that of the Beatitudes:

"And seeing the multitudes, . . . he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:1–10).

No other teacher has ever offered the matchless counsel given the multitude on the mount.

*He is my healer.* I stand in awe at His wondrous miracles. And yet I know they happened. I accept the truth of these things because I know that He is the Master of life and death. The miracles of His ministry bespeak compassion, love, and a sense of humanity wonderful to behold.

*He is my leader.* I am honored to be one in the long cavalcade of those who love Him and who have followed Him during the two millennia that have passed since His birth.

Onward, Christian soldiers!  
 Marching as to war,  
 With the cross of Jesus  
 Going on before.  
 Christ, the royal Master,  
 Leads against the foe;  
 Forward into battle,  
 See his banners go!  
 [“Onward, Christian Soldiers,” *Hymns*,  
 no. 246]

*He is my Savior and my Redeemer.* Through giving His life in pain and unspeakable suffering, He has reached down to lift me and each of us and all the sons and daughters of God from the abyss of eternal darkness following death. He has provided something better—a sphere of light and understanding, growth and beauty where we may go forward on the road that leads to eternal life. My gratitude knows no bounds. My thanks to my Lord has no conclusion.

*He is my God and my King.* From everlasting to everlasting, He will reign and rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. To His dominion there will be no end. To His glory there will be no night.

None other can take His place. None other ever will. Unblemished and without fault of any kind, He is the Lamb of God, to whom I bow and through whom I approach my Father in Heaven.

### Witnesses of the Savior’s divinity

Isaiah foretold of His coming:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

Those who walked with Him in Palestine bore witness of His divinity. The centurion who watched Him die declared in solemnity, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).

Thomas, on seeing His resurrected body, cried out in wonder, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

Those in this hemisphere to whom He appeared heard the voice of the Father introduce Him: “Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name” (3 Nephi 11:7).

And the Prophet Joseph, speaking in this dispensation, declared:

“And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father” (D&C 76:22–23).

To which I add my own witness that He is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]” (John 14:6).

Gratefully, and with love undiminished, I bear witness of these things in

His Holy name, even the name of Jesus the Christ, amen.

Elder Val R. Christensen offered the benediction.

The choir sang "The Spirit of God."

## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 170th Annual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, April 2, 2000. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### **President Thomas S. Monson**

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 170th Annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television,

cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Linda Margetts at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Richard J. Maynes of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Rejoice, the Lord Is King!"

Elder Richard J. Maynes offered the invocation.

### **President Monson**

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "Come unto Him." Following the singing, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "Come unto Him."

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

With all of you, brothers and sisters, I express appreciation to President Hinckley for his tireless shaping of the Church's future, of which this Conference Center is emblematic.

### **Becoming spiritually content**

In just a few words, a major insight came to the conscientious and the converted through Alma: "For I ought to be