

President Monson

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, after which Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bish-

opric will speak to us. The choir and congregation will then sing “Redeemer of Israel,” and following the singing, Sister Carol B. Thomas, first counselor in the Young Women general presidency, will address us. She will be followed by Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Discipleship in today's hostile wilderness

Granted, brothers and sisters, the world is “in commotion,” but the kingdom is in forward motion as never before! (see D&C 88:91; 45:26). Its distinctiveness is being more sharply defined by adverse trends in the world, where traditional values are not fastened down by the rivets of the Restoration (see D&C 105:31). They are sliding swiftly.

The results are contradictory mixtures, such as boredom and violence. Some individuals simply exist, “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12; see also Alma 41:11). The trek of modern discipleship is taking us through this hostile wilderness, including cultures ambivalent about setting limits and with no brakes!

Yes, we have unprecedented mass entertainment and mass communications but so many lonely crowds. The togetherness of technology is no substitute for the family.

Valiantly enduring trials refines us

Much as I lament the resulting and gathering storms, there can be some usefulness in them. Thereby we may become further tamed spiritually, for “except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, . . . they will not remember him” (Helaman 12:3). The Lord is always quietly refining His faithful people individually anyway, but events will also

illuminate God's higher ways and His kingdom (see D&C 136:31).

Our context is challenging, however. We have many overwhelmed parents, more and more marriages in meltdown, and dysfunctional families. Destructive consequences impact steadily from drugs, violence, and pornography. Truly, “despair cometh . . . of iniquity” (Moroni 10:22). Since the adversary desireth “that all men might be miserable like unto himself,” his is the plan of misery (2 Nephi 2:27; see also verse 18).

The valiant among us keep moving forward anyway, because they know the Lord loves them, even when they “do not know the meaning of all things” (1 Nephi 11:17). As you and I observe the valiant cope successfully with severe and relentless trials, we applaud and celebrate their emerging strength and goodness. Yet the rest of us tremble at the tuition required for the shaping of such sterling character, while hoping we would not falter should similar circumstances come to us!

Disciples stand fast in a troubled world

It may be too late to fix some communities, but not to help those individuals and families willing to fix themselves. It is not too late, either, for some to become pioneer disciples in their families and locations—or for individuals to become local peacemakers in a world from which peace has been taken (see D&C

1:35). If still others experience a shortage of exemplars, they can become such.

While Joshua was able to say, "But as for me and my house . . ." (Joshua 24:15), some individuals, presently bereft of intact families, nevertheless can still say, "But as for me . . ." and then so live as to become worthy of all the Lord has prepared for them. Thus, disciples "stand fast" (D&C 9:14), "hold out faithful to the end" (D&C 6:13), and "hold on [their] way" (D&C 122:9), even in a troubled world.

However, enduring and submitting are not passive responses at all, but instead are actually more like being braced sufficiently to report for advanced duties, while carrying—meekly and victoriously—bruises from the previous frays.

What are a few fingers of scorn now anyway, when the faithful can eventually know what it is like to be "clasped in the arms of Jesus"? (Mormon 5:11; see also 1 Nephi 8:33).

What are mocking words now, if later we hear those glorious words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? (Matthew 25:21).

"Plow in hope"

Meanwhile, Paul urges us to "plow in hope" (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Therefore, desperately needed is longitudinal perspective, the hope of the gospel. Today's *put-down* is then placed in the perspective of our being *lifted up* tomorrow in God's plan of happiness (see Alma 42:8, 16).

Since the Lord wants a people "tried in all things" (D&C 136:31), how, specifically, will we be tried? He tells us, I will try the faith and the patience of my people (see Mosiah 23:21). Since faith in the timing of the Lord may be tried, let us learn to say not only, "Thy will be done," but patiently also, "Thy timing be done."

Hope feasts on the words of Christ, "through patience and comfort of the scriptures," "written for our learning" (Romans 15:4), and bolstered by "having

all these witnesses" (Jacob 4:6; see also 2 Nephi 31:20). Faith constitutes "the assurance of things hoped for" and the proof of "things not seen" (Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:1; see also Ether 12:6). Therefore, whatever our humble furrow, we are to "plow in hope" (1 Corinthians 9:10), finally developing "a perfect brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20; see also Alma 29:4).

Yet too many of the partially committed, like Naaman, wait for the Lord to bid them to "do some great thing," while declining His biddings in small things (2 Kings 5:13). When Naaman was humbled and corrected, not only did his flesh become like that of a little child, but his heart also (see 2 Kings 5:14–15). Failure to serve the Master in small ways estranges us from Him (see Mosiah 5:13).

Those, however, who "plow in hope" not only understand the law of the harvest, but they also understand what growing seasons are all about. True, those with genuine hope may see their proximate circumstances shaken like a kaleidoscope at times, yet with the "eye of faith" they still see divine design (Alma 5:15).

Atonement is the source of ultimate hope

Ultimate hope, of course, is tied to Jesus and the great Atonement, with its free gift of the universal Resurrection and the proffer of God's greatest gift, eternal life (see Moroni 7:40–41; Alma 27:28; D&C 6:13; 14:7).

Several scriptures describe the essence of Christ's glorious and rescuing Atonement, including a breathtaking autobiographical verse confiding, "Would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:18). Since the "infinite atonement" required infinite suffering, the risk of recoil was there! (2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:12). All humanity hung on the hinge of Christ's character! Mercifully, He did not shrink but "finished [His] preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:19).

But Christ's unique submissiveness has always been in place. Indeed, He has "suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11), keenly observing His Father all the while: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19).

This verse carries intimations of grand things—beyond the beyond.

In the agonizing atoning process, Jesus let His will be "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7). As sovereigns, choosing to yield to the Highest Sovereign is our highest act of choice. It is the only surrender which is also a victory! The *putting off* of the natural man makes possible the *putting on* of the whole armor of God, which would not fully fit before! (see Ephesians 6:11, 13).

Redeeming Jesus also "poured out his soul unto death" (Mosiah 14:12; see also Isaiah 53:12; D&C 38:4). As we on occasion "pour" out our souls in personal pleadings, we are thus emptied, making room for more joy!

Paying the full dues of discipleship

Another fundamental scripture describes Jesus' having trodden the winepress of the "fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (D&C 88:106; see also D&C 76:107; 133:50). Others can and should encourage, commend, pray, and comfort, but the lifting and carrying of our individual crosses remains ours to do. Given the "fierceness" Christ endured for us, we cannot expect a discipleship of unruffled easiness. As we seek forgiveness, for example, repentance can be a rough-hewn regimen to bear. By the way, let us not, as some do, mistake the chips we have placed on our own shoulders for crosses!

Uniquely, atoning Jesus also "descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things" (D&C 88:6; see also D&C 122:8). How deep that descent

into despair and abysmal agony must have been! He did it to rescue us and in order to comprehend human suffering. Therefore, let us not resent those tutoring experiences that can develop our own empathy further (see Alma 7:11–12). A slothful heart will not do, and neither will a resentful heart. So being admitted fully to "the fellowship of his sufferings" requires the full dues of discipleship (Philippians 3:10; see also 1 Corinthians 1:9).

Moreover, Jesus not only took upon Him our sins to atone for them, but also our sicknesses and aching griefs (see Alma 7:11–12; Matthew 8:17). Hence, He knows personally all that we pass through and how to extend His perfect mercy—as well as how to succor us. His agony was all the more astonishing in that He trod "the wine-press alone" (D&C 133:50).

On occasion the God of heaven has wept (see Moses 7:28). One ponders, therefore, the agonies of Jesus' infinite Atonement and the feelings of the Father—for His Son and for us. There are no instructive, relevant revelations, but our finite, emotional extrapolations come flooding in anyway!

If, like the Savior, we do not "shrink," then we must go with the demanding flow of discipleship, including where the tutoring doctrines of the Master take us. Otherwise, we may walk with Jesus up to a point but then walk no more with Him (see John 6:66). Shrinking includes stopping as well as turning back.

"Learn of me"

The more we know of Jesus, the more we will love Him. The more we know of Jesus, the more we will trust Him. The more we know of Jesus, the more we will want to be like Him and be with Him by becoming the manner of men and women that He wishes us to be (see 3 Nephi 27:27), while living now "after the manner of happiness" (2 Nephi 5:27).

Therefore, with the help of the Holy Ghost, we can glorify Christ by repent-

ing and thereby accessing the blessings of the astonishing Atonement, which He provided for us at such a stunning cost! (see John 16:14). So, brothers and sisters, given what Jesus *died for*, are we willing to *live with* the challenges allotted to us? (see Alma 29:4, 6). Trembling is sometimes both permissible and understandable.

There are many specific ways in which we can liken to ourselves these “essence” scriptures about Jesus and the Atonement, but all are covered under this conceptual canopy: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Matthew 11:29). In fact, there is no other way to learn deeply! (see 1 Nephi 19:23). The infinite Atonement is so vast and universal, but finally, it is so very personal! Mercifully, through the Atonement we can be forgiven and, very importantly, we can know that we have been forgiven—that final, joyous emancipation from error.

By utilizing the Atonement, we access the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which “fill-

eth with hope and perfect love” (Moroni 8:26). None of us can afford to be without that needed hope and love in the treks through our Sinais of circumstance!

Plow to the end of the furrow

Thus, within the discipleship allotted to us we are to overcome the world (see 1 John 5:3–4); to finish the work we personally have been given to do; to be able to partake of a bitter cup without becoming bitter; to experience pouring out our souls; to let our wills increasingly be swallowed up in the will of the Father; to acknowledge—tough though the tutoring trials are—that indeed “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7); and to plow enduringly to the end of the furrow—all the while glorifying Him and using the matchless gifts He has given us, including, one day, all that He has (D&C 84:38).

In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

An urgent voice of warning

To those who yearn for spiritual truth, some things become self-evident. I bear my witness of these things. God is in His heavens. We mortals are His spirit offspring. Jesus is our Redeemer. Joseph Smith was God’s prophet, and Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet today. Revelations are pouring forth as in days of old. The kingdom of God, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is once more upon the earth.

Satan is real and is on the earth as well. He and his legions are wreaking havoc among the children of men. He speaks no truth, feels no love, promotes no good, and avows nothing but mayhem and destruction.

Therefore, I raise this day a “voice of warning.”¹ It is an urgent, sobering re-

minder and invitation to good men and women everywhere. Listen to these words of revelation received on November 1, 1831:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; . . .

“For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion.”²

Beware of worldly ways

The Lord speaks of calamity to befall the inhabitants of the earth. Calamities