

but there are many ways I need to *try* to show my thankfulness. One of those ways is in the payment of tithes and freewill offerings. I *want* to give something back, but I never want it to be (in King David's words) "that which doth cost me nothing."¹³

I testify that the principle of tithing is of God, taught to us in such scriptural simplicity that we cannot doubt its divinity. May we all claim its blessings forever, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Daniel 2:45.
2. Isaiah 29:14.
3. Quoted by David B. Haight in Conference Report, Apr. 1981, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1981, 42.
4. Malachi 3:10.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 48.
6. Malachi 3:11.
7. Personal correspondence.
8. In Conference Report, Apr. 1968, 74; or *Improvement Era*, June 1968, 82.
9. See Matthew 6:19–21.
10. Malachi 3:8.
11. *The Lord's Tenth* (pamphlet, 1968), 10–11.

12. Isaiah 58:11; see also Isaiah 58:6–10.
13. 2 Samuel 24:24.

President Monson

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will follow immediately thereafter.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Utah County for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Testimony." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Sheldon F. Child of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

"Who is my neighbour?"

It may very well have been a beautiful, crisp autumn day like this. The Savior was sitting, teaching some of His disciples, when a man identified only as "a certain lawyer" stood and asked Him, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus knew the man's heart and understood the question was a thinly veiled attempt to get Him to say something contrary to the law of Moses.

The Savior responded to the question with two questions of His own: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?"

As you might expect, the lawyer was able to recite the law: "Thou shalt love the

Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

"Thou hast answered right," the Savior said. "This do, and thou shalt live."

But the lawyer wasn't satisfied with that. Knowing that there were strict rules and beliefs among the Jews regarding association with those not of the faith, he pressed the Lord for more information, hoping to trap Him in controversy: "And who is my neighbour?" he asked.

It was time, once again, to teach. Jesus drew upon one of His favorite and most effective teaching techniques: a parable, perhaps one of the most beloved and

well-known parables in all of Christendom.

You know the parable, how a man from Jerusalem was on his way to Jericho and fell among thieves and was left half dead. A certain priest passed by on the other side; neither did a Levite stop to help. Then Jesus taught:

“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

“And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

Then Jesus asked the lawyer one more question: “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?”

The lawyer replied, “He that shewed mercy on him.”

Then Jesus delivered His final instruction to the lawyer—and to all who have read the parable of the good Samaritan: “Go, and do thou likewise” (see Luke 10:25–37).

Love neighbors despite differences

Every time I read this parable I am impressed with its power and simplicity. But have you ever wondered why the Savior chose to make the hero of this story a Samaritan? There was considerable antipathy between the Jews and the Samaritans at the time of Christ. Under normal circumstances these two groups avoided association with each other. It would still be a good, instructive parable if the man who fell among thieves had been rescued by a brother Jew.

His deliberate use of Jews and Samaritans clearly teaches that we are all neighbors and that we should love, esteem, respect, and serve one another despite our deepest differences—including religious, political, and cultural differences.

That instruction continues today to be part of the teachings of The Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In enumerating the key doctrines of the restored Church, Joseph Smith said that while “we claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience,” we also “allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may” (Articles of Faith 1:11).

True disciples reach out with love

Thankfully, many of our members understand this doctrine and live it during the course of their daily lives. I recently read a news account of a tragic death in a community here in Utah. A grieving young widow was quoted:

“We’ve been overwhelmed by support. We’re not Mormon, but the local ward here has been all over us with meals and help and words of comfort. It’s been a total outpouring of love, and we appreciate it” (quoted in Dick Harmon, “Former Ute’s Death Leaves Wife Coping, Wondering,” *Daily Herald* [Provo, Utah], 11 Aug. 2001, A3).

That’s just as it should be. If we are truly disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will reach out with love and understanding to all of our neighbors at all times, particularly in times of need. A recent *Church News* carried a story of two women who are dear friends, a “Jewish physician from New York and [a] stay-at-home [Latter-day Saint] mom of six from Utah, both a long way from home in Dallas [Texas].” Our member reported:

“If our friendship had been put through a computer matching service, I doubt we would have made it past the first hurdle. . . .

“. . . A woman with a busy medical practice, I assumed, would have little desire to discuss the color of the hospitality napkins for PTA.

“Funny thing about assumptions—they can cut away the very roots of something that could flourish and grow if given a chance. I am forever grateful that as-

sumptions were cast aside” (Shauna Erickson, “Unlikely Friends Sharing a Lifetime,” *Church News*, 18 Aug. 2001, 10).

Perceptions and assumptions can be very dangerous and unfair. There are some of our members who may fail to reach out with friendly smiles, warm handshakes, and loving service to all of their neighbors. At the same time, there may be those who move into our neighborhoods who are not of our faith who come with negative preconceptions about the Church and its members. Surely good neighbors should put forth every effort to understand each other and to be kind to one another regardless of religion, nationality, race, or culture.

Practice the doctrine of inclusion

Occasionally I hear of members of offending those of other faiths by overlooking them and leaving them out. This can occur especially in communities where our members are the majority. I have heard about narrow-minded parents who tell children that they cannot play with a particular child in the neighborhood simply because his or her family does not belong to our Church. This kind of behavior is not in keeping with the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot comprehend why any member of our Church would allow these kinds of things to happen. I have been a member of this Church my entire life. I have been a full-time missionary, twice a bishop, a mission president, a Seventy, and now an Apostle. I have never taught—nor have I ever heard taught—a doctrine of exclusion. I have never heard the members of this Church urged to be anything but loving, kind, tolerant, and benevolent to our friends and neighbors of other faiths.

The Lord expects a great deal from us. Parents, please teach your children and practice yourselves the principle of inclusion of others and not exclusion because of religious, political, or cultural differences.

While it is true that we declare to the world that the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith and we urge our members to share their faith and testimonies with others, it has never been the policy of the Church that those who choose not to listen or to accept our message should be shunned or ignored. Indeed, the opposite is true. President Gordon B. Hinckley has repeatedly reminded us of this special obligation that we have as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I quote just two:

“Each of us is an individual. Each of us is different. There must be respect for those differences” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 661).

“We must work harder to build mutual respect, an attitude of forbearance, with tolerance one for another regardless of the doctrines and philosophies which we may espouse. Concerning these you and I may disagree. But we can do so with respect and civility” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 665).

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we understand that we are perceived by some to be “a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9). Our doctrines and beliefs are important to us. We embrace them and cherish them. I am not suggesting for a moment that we shouldn’t. On the contrary, our peculiarity and the uniqueness of the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ are indispensable elements in offering the people of the world a clear choice. Neither am I suggesting that we should associate in any relationship that would place us or our families at spiritual risk. We must understand, however, that not everyone is going to accept our doctrine of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. For the most part, our neighbors not of our faith are good, honorable people—every bit as good and honorable as we strive to be. They care about their families, just like we do. They want to make the world

a better place, just like we do. They are kind and loving and generous and faithful, just like we seek to be. Nearly 25 years ago the First Presidency declared:

“Our message . . . is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race, or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters because we are sons and daughters of the same Eternal Father” (First Presidency statement, 15 Feb. 1978).

That is our doctrine—a doctrine of inclusion. That is what we believe. That is what we have been taught. Of all people on this earth, we should be the most loving, the kindest, and the most tolerant because of that doctrine.

How to avoid making others feel excluded

May I suggest three simple things we can do to avoid making others in our neighborhoods feel excluded?

First, get to know your neighbors. Learn about their families, their work, their views. Get together with them, if they are willing, and do so without being pushy and without any ulterior motives. Friendship should never be offered as a means to an end; it can and should be an end unto itself. I received a letter from a woman who recently moved to Utah, a small part of which I quote:

“I must tell you, Elder Ballard, that when I greet my neighbors, or if I wave to them, they do not acknowledge my greeting. If I pass them while taking my morning or evening walk, my salutation is not returned. Other people of color consistently express similar negative responses to friendly gestures.”

If members of the Church are among her neighbors, surely they must know that this should not happen. Let us cultivate meaningful relationships of mutual trust and understanding with people from different backgrounds and beliefs.

Second, I believe it would be good if we eliminated a couple of phrases from

our vocabulary: *nonmember* and *non-Mormon*. Such phrases can be demeaning and even belittling. Personally, I don't consider myself to be a “non-Catholic” or a “non-Jew.” I am a Christian. I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is how I prefer to be identified—for who and what I am, as opposed to being identified for what I am not. Let us extend that same courtesy to those who live among us. If a collective description is needed, then “neighbors” seems to work well in most cases.

And third, if neighbors become testy or frustrated because of some disagreement with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or with some law we support for moral reasons, please don't suggest to them—even in a humorous way—that they consider moving someplace else. I cannot comprehend how any member of our Church can even think such a thing! Our pioneer ancestors were driven from place to place by uninformed and intolerant neighbors. They experienced extraordinary hardship and persecution because they thought, acted, and believed differently from others. If our history teaches us nothing else, it should teach us to respect the rights of all people to peacefully coexist with one another.

Stand together for the common good

I now speak to all those who are not of our faith. If there are issues of concern, let us talk about them. We want to be helpful. Please understand, however, that our doctrines and teachings are set by the Lord, so sometimes we will have to agree to disagree with you, but we can do so without being disagreeable. In our communities we can and must work together in an atmosphere of courtesy, respect, and civility. Here in Utah, a group of concerned citizens formed the Alliance for Unity. This effort has been endorsed by our Church, as well as other churches and organizations. One of its purposes is “to seek to help build a community where dif-

fering viewpoints are acknowledged and valued" ("Alliance for Unity: Statement of Purpose" [accompanying First Presidency letter of 20 Sept. 2001]). Perhaps there has never been a more important time for neighbors all around the world to stand together for the common good of one another.

"Love one another"

Just hours before He began the painful physical and spiritual processes of the Atonement, the Savior met with His Apostles to partake of the Feast of the Passover—His Last Supper—and to give them the final instructions He would give them in mortality. Among these teachings is the stirring, life-changing declaration:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34–35).

That is what Jesus taught His disciples, including "a certain lawyer," through the parable of the good Samaritan. And that is what He is teaching us today through living prophets and apostles. Love one another. Be kind to one another despite our deepest differences. Treat one another with respect and civility. I know and testify that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, and I know that He expects all of us to follow His admonition to be better neighbors, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Testimony."

Elder Sheldon F. Child offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 6, 2001, at 6:00 P.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by men of the Tabernacle Choir joined by Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the Salt Lake area. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford conducted the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, Assembly Hall, BYU Marriott Center, Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the men of the Tabernacle Choir joined by Melchizedek Priesthood holders from the Salt Lake area, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

We shall begin this priesthood session with the choir singing "Come, Rejoice." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Cree-L Kofford of the Seventy.

The choir will then sing "There Is a Green Hill Far Away." After the choir has sung, Elder Robert D. Hales of the