

Down through the generations of time, the message from Jesus has been the same. To Peter and Andrew by the shores of the beautiful Sea of Galilee, He said, "Follow me."²¹ To Philip of old came the call, "Follow me."²² To the Levite who sat at receipt of customs came the instruction, "Follow me."²³ And to you and to me, if we but listen, will come that same beckoning invitation, "Follow me."

My prayer today is that we shall do so. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Luke 1:80.
2. John 3:28.
3. Luke 3:16.
4. Matthew 11:11.
5. Psalm 46:10.
6. Genesis 22:9–10, 12.
7. Job 1:1.
8. Job 2:9.
9. Job 16:19.
10. Job 19:25.
11. Genesis 6:9.
12. Bible Dictionary, "Noah," 738–39.
13. In Conference Report, Oct. 1952, 48.

14. Ruth 1:16.
15. 1 Nephi 3:7.
16. *Hymns*, no. 274.
17. Joseph Smith—History 1:25.
18. *Hymns*, no. 301.
19. Matthew 27:22.
20. Mark 15:13.
21. Matthew 4:19.
22. John 1:43.
23. Luke 5:27.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson. Our next speaker will be Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy. The choir and congregation will then sing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

At the conclusion of the singing, Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, released yesterday as the Young Women general president, will speak to us. She will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the choir will then sing "How Firm a Foundation."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

I'll go where you want me to go

My text comes from a hymn that has inspired faithful servants of the Lord for many generations:

It may not be on the mountain height
Or over the stormy sea,
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me.
But if, by a still, small voice he calls
To paths that I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand
in thine:

I'll go where you want me to go.
["I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go,"
Hymns, no. 270]

Penned by a poetess who was not a Latter-day Saint, these words express the commitment of the faithful children of God in all ages.

Abraham, who led Isaac on that heart-breaking journey to Mount Moriah, was faithfully going where the Lord wanted him to go (see Genesis 22). So was David when he stepped out before the hosts of Israel to answer the challenge of the giant Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17). Esther, inspired to save her people, walked a life-threatening path to challenge the king in his inner court (see Esther 4–5). "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord" was the motivation for Lehi to leave Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 2) and for his son Nephi to return for

the precious records (see 1 Nephi 3–4). Hundreds of other scriptural examples can be cited.

All of these faithful souls showed their obedience to the Lord's direction and their faith in His power and goodness. As Nephi explained, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Nephi 3:7).

Example of President J. Reuben Clark

All about us, and in our memories of earlier times, we have inspiring examples of the submissive, faithful service of Latter-day Saints. One of the best known was that of President J. Reuben Clark. After he had served over 16 years as an extraordinarily influential first counselor, the First Presidency was reorganized and he was called as second counselor. Offering an example of humility and willingness to serve that has influenced generations, he said to the Church:

"In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve but how. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 154).

Service of faithful senior missionaries

Just as significant, though less visible, are the millions of members now laboring with similar faith and devotion in the remote corners of the Lord's vineyard. Our faithful senior missionaries provide the best examples I know.

I recently reviewed the missionary papers of over 50 senior couples. All had already served at least three missions when they submitted their papers for another call. Their homes were everywhere from Australia to Arizona, California to Missouri. Their ages ranged from the 60s and

early 70s to the—well, never mind. One couple, who were offering themselves for a seventh mission, had already served on Temple Square, in Alaska, in New Zealand, in Kenya, and in Ghana. They were sent to the Philippines. Scores of similar examples could be cited.

The priesthood leaders' comments on the papers of these couples are testimonies of service and sacrifice. I quote several:

"Willing to go anyplace, do anything for whatever length of time required."

"[These] are great examples of Church members who dedicate their lives to the Lord."

"Will go where the Lord wants [us] to go," another couple noted. "We pray we will be sent where we are needed."

Priesthood leader comments on the qualifications of these couples provide a good summary of the work our senior missionaries do so effectively.

"He is great in getting programs running and [in] leadership."

"Their joy is fullest when they are asked to 'build' and develop; therefore an assignment in a developing area of the Church may be appropriate. Willing to serve in whatever capacity called."

"They will likely be of more value working with [less-actives] and converts rather than in offices."

"They love the youth and have a gift with them."

"They feel most effective in and have a fondness for leadership support and fellowship work."

"They have slowed down some physically, but not in spiritual matters or missionary zeal."

"He is a true missionary. His first name is Nephi, and he follows his namesake. She is a tremendous lady, has always been a great example. Will do great wherever called. This is their fifth mission." (They had previously served in Guam, Nigeria, Vietnam, Pakistan, Singapore, and Malaysia. Giving them some respite from those arduous paths, the Lord's servants

called that couple to serve in the Nauvoo Temple.)

Another couple spoke for all these heroes and heroines when they wrote: "Will go anywhere and do what is asked. It is not a sacrifice; it is a privilege."

These senior missionaries offer a special measure of sacrifice and commitment. So do our mission presidents and temple presidents and their loyal companions. All leave their homes and families to serve full-time for a season. The same is true of the army of young missionaries, who put their lives at home on hold and bid goodbye to family and friends and set forth (usually at their own expense) to serve wherever they are assigned by the Lord, speaking through His servants.

I'll go where you want me to go,
 dear Lord,
 Over mountain or plain or sea;
 I'll say what you want me to say,
 dear Lord;
 I'll be what you want me to be.
 [*Hymns*, no. 270]

A tradition of unselfish service

Millions of others serve from their homes on a Church-service basis. So it is with the 26,000 bishoprics and branch presidencies and the faithful presidencies of the quorums and Relief Society, Primary, and Young Women who serve with them and under their direction. So it is with millions of others—faithful teachers in wards, branches, stakes, and districts. And think of the hundreds of thousands of home teachers and visiting teachers who fulfill the Lord's command to "watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them" (D&C 20:53). All of these can join in this inspired verse:

Perhaps today there are loving words
 Which Jesus would have me speak;
 There may be now in the paths of sin
 Some wand'rer whom I should seek.

O Savior, if thou wilt be my guide,
 Tho dark and rugged the way,
 My voice shall echo the message sweet:
 I'll say what you want me to say.
 [*Hymns*, no. 270]

As the prophet-king Benjamin taught, "When [we] are in the service of [our] fellow beings [we] are only in the service of [our] God" (Mosiah 2:17). He also cautioned us to "see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27).

The gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to become converted. It teaches us what we should do, and it provides us opportunities to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. The full measure of this conversion to men and women of God happens best through our labors in His vineyard.

We have a great tradition of unselfish service in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Indeed, one of the distinguishing characteristics of this Church is the fact that we have no paid or professional clergy in our thousands of local congregations and in the regional stakes, districts, and missions that oversee them. As an essential part of God's plan for His children, the leadership and work of His Church is provided by His children who give their time freely for the service of God and their fellowmen. They obey the Lord's command to love Him and to serve Him (see John 14:15; D&C 20:19; 42:29; 59:5). This is the way men and women prepare for the ultimate blessing of eternal life.

Room for improvement in our service

Still, there is room for improvement in the commitment of some. When I ask stake presidents for suggestions on subjects I should treat at stake conferences, I often hear about members who refuse Church callings or accept callings and fail to fulfill their responsibilities. Some are not com-

mitted and faithful. It has always been so. But this is not without consequence.

The Savior spoke of the contrast between the faithful and the unfaithful in three great parables recorded in the 25th chapter of Matthew. Half of the invited guests were excluded from the wedding feast because they were unprepared when the bridegroom came (see Matthew 25:1–13). The unprofitable servants who failed to employ the talents they were given by the Master were not allowed to enter into the joy of the Lord (see Matthew 25:14–30). And when the Lord came in His glory, He separated the sheep, who had served Him and their fellowmen, from the goats, who had not. Only those who had “done it unto one of the least of these my brethren” (Matthew 25:40) were set on His right hand to inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (see Matthew 25:31–46).

My brothers and sisters, if you are delinquent in commitment, please consider who it is you are refusing or neglecting to serve when you decline a calling or when you accept, promise, and fail to fulfill. I pray that each of us will follow this inspired declaration:

There’s surely somewhere a lowly place
In earth’s harvest fields so wide
Where I may labor through life’s
short day
For Jesus, the Crucified.
[*Hymns*, no. 270]

Jesus’ example

Jesus showed the way. Even though He shrank from the bitter path that led through Gethsemane and Calvary (see D&C 19:18), He submissively said to the Father, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Earlier He taught:

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:24–26).

The purpose of our service

We need to remember the purpose of our service to one another. If it were only to accomplish some part of His work, God could dispatch “legions of angels,” as Jesus taught on another occasion (see Matthew 26:53). But that would not achieve the purpose of the service He has prescribed. We serve God and our fellowmen in order to become the kind of children who can return to live with our heavenly parents.

So trusting my all to thy tender care,
And knowing thou lovest me,
I’ll do thy will with a heart sincere:
I’ll be what you want me to be.
[*Hymns*, no. 270]

Service brings a change of heart

Almost a decade ago I read a letter from a returned missionary who described this process in his life. He had written to thank those who direct missionary work “for daring to send me where the Lord required rather than where I had deemed appropriate.” He had come, he said, “from a background of proud, competitive intellectualism.” Before his mission he was a student at a prestigious university in the eastern United States. Quote:

“I guess out of a sense of obligation and inertia, I filled out my [missionary] papers and sent them in, extremely careful to mark the column indicating greatest desire to serve abroad and in a foreign language. I was careful to make it apparent that I was an accomplished student of Russian and fully capable of spending two

years among the Russian people. Confident that no committee could resist such qualifications, I rested confident that I would enjoy a wonderfully mind-expanding cultural adventure."

He was shocked to receive a call to serve in a mission in the United States. He didn't know anything about the state where he would serve, except that it was in his own country speaking English rather than abroad speaking the language he had learned, and, as he said, "The people I would work with would likely be academic incompetents." He continued, "I almost refused to accept the call, feeling that I would be more fulfilled by enlisting in the Peace Corps or something else."

Fortunately this proud young man found the courage and faith to accept the call and to follow the direction and counsel of his fine mission president. Then the miracle of spiritual growth began. He described it thus:

"As I began to serve among the uneducated people of [this state], I struggled mightily for several months, but gradually the sweet workings of the Spirit began to tear down the walls of pride and disbelief that had wrapped themselves so tightly around my soul. The miracle of a conversion to Christ began. The sense of the reality of God and the eternal brotherhood

of all men came more and more powerfully to my troubled mind."

It was not easy, he admitted, but with the influence of his great mission president and with his growing love for the people he served, it was possible, and it occurred.

"My desire to love and serve these people who in the ultimate scale were at least my peers, almost definitely my superiors, waxed stronger and stronger. I learned humility for the first time in my life; I learned what it means to make our valuations of others [without relying on the] irrelevant details of life. I began to feel swelling within my heart a love of the spirits that came here to earth with me" (letter to General Authorities, Feb. 1994).

Such is the miracle of service. As the poetess wrote:

But if, by a still, small voice he calls
To paths that I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand
in thine:
I'll go where you want me to go.
[*Hymns*, no. 270]

I testify of Jesus Christ, who beckons us to His path and His service, and pray that we will have the faith and commitment to follow and the power to be what He wants us to be, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

That they may be one in us

As His mortal ministry drew to a close, knowing "that his hour was come" (John 13:1), Jesus gathered His Apostles in an upper room in Jerusalem. Following their supper and after He had washed their feet and taught them, Jesus offered a sublime Intercessory Prayer on behalf of these Apostles and all who would be-

lieve in Him. He supplicated the Father in these words:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.