

Be Fruitful, Multiply, and Subdue the Earth

By Elder Joseph W. Sitati

Of the Seventy



Heavenly Father has charged and blessed us to be fruitful, to multiply, and to subdue the earth that we might become like Him.

Thank you, Tabernacle Choir, for that sweet tribute to the Savior of the world.

In the day that God the Father called upon His Only Begotten Son to make man in Their image and likeness, He blessed His children, saying, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion ... over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”¹ Thus, our mortal journey began with both a divine charge and a blessing. A loving Father gave us the charge and the blessing to be fruitful and to multiply and to have dominion so that we can develop and become even as He is.

Brothers and sisters, this afternoon I invite your faith and prayers as I share some thoughts with you about three fundamental attributes of our divine nature. My prayer is that we might all more fully recognize and fulfill our sacred responsibility—our Father’s charge—to develop our divine nature so that we may navigate our journey more successfully and obtain our divine destiny.

First, God Charged Us to Be Fruitful

An important part of being fruitful that is sometimes overlooked is that of bringing forth the kingdom of God upon the earth. The Savior taught:

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. ...

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”²

We become fruitful as we abide in Christ and as we “take upon [ourselves His] name [and] ... serve him to the end”³ by helping others come unto Him.

In our day, living prophets and apostles continue to lift their voices to invite each one of us to become fully engaged in the work of salvation according to our abilities and opportunities.

The starting point of a response that yields much fruit is to “be meek and lowly in heart.”⁴ We can then more fully

come unto Christ as we yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and keep all the covenants we have made.⁵ We can seek and receive the gift of charity and have power to invite our own families, our ancestors, and our member and nonmember neighbors and friends to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Laboring in the spirit of charity is not a duty but a joy. Challenges become opportunities to build faith. We become “witnesses of [the goodness of] God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death.”⁶

All of us can and should become fully engaged in the work of salvation. The Savior has given us the following responsibility with a promise: “I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”⁷

Second, God Charged Us to Multiply

Our physical bodies are a blessing from God. We received them for the purposes of fulfilling Heavenly Father’s work “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”⁸ The body is the means by which we can attain our divine potential.

The body enables Heavenly Father’s obedient spirit children to experience life on earth.⁹ Bearing children gives other spirit children of God the opportunity to also enjoy life on earth. All who are born in mortality have the opportunity to progress and to be exalted if they obey God’s commandments.

Marriage between a man and a woman is the institution that God ordained for the fulfillment of the charge to multiply. A same-gender relationship does not multiply.

A legal and lawful marriage sealed in the temple and in which the sealing covenants are honored gives parents and their children the opportunity for the best experience of love and preparation for a fruitful life. It offers them the ideal environment in which they can live their covenants made with God.

Because of His love for us, Heavenly Father has provided that all His faithful children who do not or are not able to enjoy the blessings of a covenant marriage and children or a fulness of those blessings for reasons not of their making will, in the Lord’s appointed time, enjoy these blessings.¹⁰

Living prophets and apostles have counseled all who have the opportunity to enter into the covenant of eternal marriage to proceed in wisdom and faith. We should not put off the time of that sacred day because of worldly pursuits or hold our expectations of a suitable companion at a level that disqualifies every possible candidate.

The promise to all who are sealed in the covenant of eternal marriage and who are fruitful through keeping their covenants is that the adversary will never have power to undermine the foundation of their eternal companionship.

Third, God Charged Us to Subdue the Earth

To subdue the earth and have dominion over every living thing is to control these things so they fulfill the will of God¹¹ as they serve the purposes of His children. Subduing includes gaining mastery over our own bodies.¹² It does *not* include being helpless victims of these things or using them contrary to the will of God.¹³

Developing the ability to subdue the things of the earth begins with humility to recognize our human weakness and

the power available to us through Christ and His Atonement. For “Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.”¹⁴ This power becomes available to us as we choose to act in obedience to His commandments. We increase our ability by seeking the gifts of the Spirit and by developing our talents.

I was born and raised in humble circumstances typical to many families in Africa. I gained the ability to lift myself from those circumstances by seeking and obtaining, with the caring help of my parents, a good education. Developing a vision of what I could become was essential to my progress. Later, as a young couple, my wife, Gladys, and I found the restored gospel, which continues to bless our lives with spiritual direction. Like every family, we have our trials and challenges. But as we look to the Lord for help, we have found answers that bring peace and comfort, and we do not feel overwhelmed by these things.

The challenges facing human society today, including immorality, pornography, armed conflict, pollution, substance abuse, and poverty, flourish because many in the world have turned themselves over by choice “to the will of the devil and the flesh”¹⁵ rather than to the will of God. “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world.”¹⁶

However, God invites *all* His children to obtain His help to overcome and endure the challenges of this life with these words:

“I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh.

“... If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, ... ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.”¹⁷

Faithful Latter-day Saints who understand their divine potential and rely wholeheartedly on the power available through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ are strengthened in their natural weakness and “can do all things.”¹⁸ They are enabled to overcome the enticings of evil that have put many under bondage to the adversary. Paul taught that:

“God is faithful, [and] will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”¹⁹

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”²⁰

Heavenly Father has charged and blessed us to be fruitful, to multiply, and to subdue the earth that we might become like Him. He has made help available that we may each, according to our individual choosing, actually grow to become like Him. I pray that we might all live our lives such that we will be guided by the vision of our divine nature, claim all our divine privileges, and fulfill our divine destiny.

I testify of the living reality of God the Father and of His Beloved Son, our Savior Jesus Christ; of His glorious plan of happiness; and of the keys He has caused to be bestowed upon a living prophet on earth today, even Thomas S. Monson, whom we love and sustain. I pray that we may have power to enjoy the fulness of His blessings in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. Moses 2:28; see also Moses 2:26–27; Genesis 1:26–28.

2. John 15:5, 7–8.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 20:37.

4. Moroni 7:44.

5. See Mosiah 3:19.

6. Mosiah 18:9.

7. John 15:16.

8. Moses 1:39.

9. See Moses 5:10–11.

10. See *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (2010), 1.3.3; Ezra Taft Benson, “To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 96–97.

11. See Jacob 2:18–19.

12. See 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Galatians 5:16–25; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7; 2 Timothy 2:22.

13. See Jacob 2:12–16, 20–21.

14. Moroni 7:33.

15. 2 Nephi 10:24.

16. Doctrine and Covenants 1:16.

17. Moses 6:51–52.

18. Alma 26:12.

19. 1 Corinthians 10:13.

20. Hebrews 2:18.