

He Asks Us to Be His Hands

By Cheryl A. Esplin
First Counselor in the Primary General Presidency

True Christlike service is selfless and focuses on others.

“Love one another; as I have loved you.”¹ These words, sung by this remarkable choir, were spoken by Jesus just hours before His great atoning sacrifice—a sacrifice Elder Jeffrey R. Holland described as “the most majestic manifestation of pure love ever to be demonstrated in the history of this world.”²

Jesus not only taught us to love, but He also lived what He taught. Throughout His ministry, Jesus “went about doing good”³ and “entreated all to follow His example.”⁴ He taught, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.”⁵

President Thomas S. Monson, who has understood and lived the admonition to love, said: “I believe the Savior is telling us that unless we lose ourselves in service to others, there is little purpose to our own lives. Those who live only for themselves eventually shrivel up and ... lose their lives, while those who lose themselves in service to others grow and flourish—and in effect save their lives.”⁶

True Christlike service is selfless and focuses on others. One woman who took care of her invalid husband explained, “Don’t think of your task as a burden; think of it as an opportunity to learn what love really is.”⁷

Speaking at a BYU devotional, Sister Sondra D. Heaston asked: “What if we could really see into each other’s hearts? Would we understand each other better? By feeling what others feel, seeing what others see, and hearing what others hear, would we make, and take, the time to serve others, and would we treat them differently? Would we treat them with more patience, more kindness, and more tolerance?”

Sister Heaston shared an experience from when she served at a Young Women camp. She said:

“One of our ... devotional speakers ... taught us about ‘becoming.’ One of her

statements ... was, 'Be someone who reaches out to know and serve others—throw away the mirrors and look through the window.'

"To demonstrate this, she called up one of the young women and asked that young woman to stand facing her. [She] then pulled out a mirror and put it between the young woman and herself so that she, [the speaker], was looking into the mirror while she tried to talk with the young woman. Not surprisingly, it didn't even begin to be an effective or heartfelt conversation. This was a powerful object lesson that illustrated how difficult it is to communicate with and serve others if we are too worried about ourselves and see only ourselves and our needs. [She] then put away the mirror, pulled out a window frame, and put it between her face and the young woman's face. ... We were able to see that the young woman had become [her] focal point and that true service requires that we focus on the needs and emotions of others. Ofttimes we are so worried about ourselves and our own busy lives—as we look in mirrors while trying to look for opportunities to serve—that we do not see clearly through the windows of service."⁸

President Monson has often reminded us that we are "surrounded by those in need of our attention, our encouragement, our support, our comfort, our kindness—be they family members, friends, acquaintances, or strangers." He said, "We are the Lord's hands here upon the earth, with the mandate to serve and to lift His children. He is dependent upon each of us."⁹

Last year in January, the *Friend* and *Liahona* magazines invited children all around the world to follow the counsel of President Monson—to be the Lord's

hands. Children were invited to perform acts of service—large and small. They were then encouraged to trace their hand on a piece of paper, cut it out, write on it the service they did, and send it to the magazines. Many of you listening tonight might be some of the thousands of children who did a loving service and sent it in.¹⁰

When children learn how to love and serve others when they are young, they set a pattern of service for the rest of their lives. Often children teach the rest of us that showing love and service doesn't have to be big and grandiose to be meaningful and make a difference.

A Primary teacher shared the following example. "Today," she said, "our five- and six-year-old class made love necklaces. Each child drew pictures on strips of paper: one of themselves, one of Jesus, and some of members of their family and loved ones. We glued the strips into circles that looped through each other to make a chain that we turned into love necklaces. As they were drawing, the children talked about their families

CHILDREN TALKED ABOUT THEIR FAMILIES.

“Heather said, ‘I don’t think my sister loves me. We are always fighting. ... I even hate myself. I have a bad life.’ And she put her head in her hands.

“I thought about her family circumstances and felt that maybe she did indeed have a hard life. But after Heather had said this, Anna, down at the other end of the table, responded, ‘Heather, I am putting you in my necklace between me and Jesus because He loves you and I love you.’

“When Anna said that, Heather crawled under the table to get to Anna and threw her arms around her.

“At the end of class, when her grandmother came to pick her up, Heather said, ‘Guess what, Grandma? Jesus loves me.’”

When we reach out in love and service even in the smallest ways, hearts are changed and softened as others feel the love of the Lord.

Sometimes, however, because of the countless people all about us who need help and relief from burdens, it can be difficult to meet the many pressing needs.

Sisters, some of you listening may feel stretched to capacity ministering to the needs of family members. Remember, in those routine and often mundane tasks, you are “in the service of your God.”¹¹

Others of you might be feeling an emptiness that could be filled as you look into your neighborhood or community for opportunities to help ease another’s burdens.

All of us can incorporate some service into our daily living. We live in a contentious world. We give service when we don’t criticize, when we refuse to gossip, when we don’t judge, when we smile, when we say thank you, and when we are patient and kind.

Other kinds of service take time, intentional planning, and extra energy. But they are worth our every effort. Perhaps we could start by asking ourselves these questions:

- Who in my circle of influence could I help today?
- What time and resources do I have?
- In what ways can I use my talents and skills to bless others?
- What might we do as a family?

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught:

“You must do ... what disciples of Christ have done in every dispensation: counsel together, use all resources available, seek the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, ask the Lord for His confirmation, and then roll up your sleeves and go to work.

“I give you a promise,” he said. “If you will follow this pattern, you will receive specific guidance as to the *who, what, when, and where* of providing in the Lord’s way.”¹²

Whenever I wonder what it will be like when the Savior comes again, I think of His visit to the Nephites when He asked:

“Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy. ...

“... [The Savior] did heal them every one.”¹³

For now, He asks us to be His hands.

I have come to know that it is the love of God and neighbor that gives meaning to life. May we follow our Savior’s example and His admonition to reach out to others with love.

I testify to the reality of President Henry B. Eyring’s promise “that if [we’ll] use [our] gifts to serve someone else, [we’ll] feel the Lord’s love for that person. [We’ll] also feel his love for [us].”¹⁴ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.