

"Walk with Me"

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Our ordination to the priesthood is an invitation from the Lord to walk with Him, to do what He does, to serve the way He serves.

My beloved brethren of the priesthood, my purpose today is both to reassure you and to invigorate you in your priesthood service. In some ways, it is similar to the purpose I imagine the Savior had when He met a rich young man who asked, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16). Perhaps you have come to this conference, as this young man went to the Savior, wondering whether your service has been acceptable. And at the same time, you may sense that there is more to do—perhaps much more! I pray that I may be able to convey the Lord's loving approval for what you have already done, while also offering an encouraging glimpse of what you may, with His help, yet achieve as a holder of His holy priesthood.

The rich young man was asked to sell everything he had and give to the poor and follow the Savior; your future progress may not require that, but it will require a measure of sacrifice. Either way, I hope my message does not cause you to "[go] away sorrowful," as the young man did. (See Matthew 19:20–22.) Rather, I trust that you will "go on your way rejoicing" (D&C 84:105) because you want to improve and you think you can.

Even so, it's natural to feel some inadequacy when we consider what the Lord has called us to do. In fact, if you told me that you feel perfectly capable of fulfilling your priesthood duties, I might worry that you do not understand them. On the other hand, if you told me that you feel like giving up because the task is too far beyond your abilities, then I would want to help you understand how the Lord magnifies and strengthens the holders of His priesthood to do things they never could have done alone.

This is just as true for me in my calling as it is for you in yours. None of us can do the work of the priesthood, and do it well, relying solely on our own wisdom and talents. That is because this is not our work—it is the Lord's. So the only way to succeed is to rely on Him, whether you are a newly called deacon trusted with the task to bring a measure of spiritual power to the ordinance of the sacrament; or a young home teacher assigned by the Lord to love and minister to a family you don't know and who seems not to want your love or your ministering; or a father who knows you are to preside over your home in righteousness, but perhaps you're unsure how to do it, and

time seems to be running out, because those children are growing up quickly and the world seems so harsh and hostile.

So if you feel a little overwhelmed, take that as a good sign. It indicates that you can sense the magnitude of the trust God has placed in you. It means that you have some small understanding of what the priesthood really is.

There are very few people in the world who have that understanding. Even those who can recite a reasonable definition may not truly understand it. There are some scriptures that, through the power of the Spirit they carry, can deepen our sense of awe regarding the holy priesthood. Here are some of those scriptures:

"The power and authority of the ... Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

"To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

"The power and authority of the ... Aaronic Priesthood, is to hold the keys of the ministering of angels" (D&C 107:18–20).

"In the ordinances [of the priesthood], the power of godliness is manifest. ...

"For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live" (D&C 84:20, 22).

"This high priesthood [is] after the order of [God's] Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things" (Alma 13:7).

"Every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course;

"To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world" (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:30–31 [in the Bible appendix]).

One way to respond to such awe-inspiring descriptions of the power of the priesthood is to assume that they do not apply to us. Another way to respond is with soul-searching questions, asked in our own hearts, such as these: Have I ever felt that the heavens have been opened to me? Would anyone use the phrase "ministering of angels" to describe my priesthood service? Do I bring the "power of godliness" into the

lives of those I serve? Have I ever broken a mountain, defied an army, broken someone's bands, or subdued worldly powers—even if only figuratively—in order to accomplish God's will?

Such introspection always brings a feeling that we could be doing more in the service of the Lord. I hope it also brings you a feeling that you *want* to do more—a longing to participate more fully in the Lord's miraculous work. Such feelings are the first step toward becoming the kind of men that priesthood service is meant to produce.

The next step is described in an interaction between Jehovah and Enoch. We know Enoch as a mighty prophet who established Zion in the midst of great wickedness. But before he was a mighty prophet, Enoch saw himself as "but a lad, ... slow of speech," and hated by all the people (Moses 6:31). Listen to the words the Lord used to encourage Enoch. They are also His words to you who are called to minister to others as a priesthood holder:

"And the Lord said unto Enoch: Go forth and do as I have commanded thee, and no man shall pierce thee. Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance, for all flesh is in my hands, and I will do as seemeth me good. ...

"Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore all thy words will I justify; and the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me" (Moses 6:32, 34).

Brethren, our ordination to the priesthood is an invitation from the Lord to walk with Him. And what does it mean to walk with the Lord? It means to do what He does, to serve the way He serves. He sacrificed His own comforts to bless those in need, so that's what we try to do. He seemed to take particular notice of people who were overlooked and even shunned by society, so we should try to do that too. He testified boldly yet lovingly of the true doctrine He received from His Father, even if it was unpopular, and so must we. He said to all, "Come unto me" (Matthew 11:28), and we say to all, "Come unto Him." As priesthood holders, we are His representatives. We act not for ourselves but for Him. We speak not our words but His. The people we serve come to know Him better because of our service.

As soon as we accept the Lord's invitation "Walk with me," the nature of our priesthood service changes. It becomes all at once higher and nobler but also more achievable, because we know that we are not alone. I felt this most powerfully when President Thomas S. Monson laid his hands on my head nine years ago and blessed me as I began my service in my current calling. In that blessing, he recited these words of the Savior: "And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).

I have relied upon that promise many times, and I have seen it fulfilled in many ways throughout my 72 years of priesthood service. It happened when I was a new Aaronic

Priesthood holder with an assignment to pass the sacrament. Terrified that I would make a mistake, I went outside the chapel before the meeting started and prayed in desperation that God would help me. An answer came. I felt that the Lord was with me. I felt His confidence in me, and so I felt confidence in my part in His work.

It happened again while I was serving as a bishop. I received a phone call from a woman who had made a serious mistake and now faced a difficult, life-changing decision. As I visited with her, I felt I knew the answer to her problem, but I also felt strongly that I should not give her that answer—she needed to obtain it for herself. My words to her were "I believe God will tell you what to do if you would ask Him." She later reported that she did ask Him and He did tell her.

On another occasion a phone call came when I was a bishop—this time from the police. I was told that a drunk driver had crashed his car through the glass into the lobby of a bank. When the bewildered driver saw the security guard with his weapon brandished, he cried, "Don't shoot! I'm a Mormon!"

The inebriated driver was discovered to be a member of my ward, baptized only recently. As I waited to speak to him in the bishop's office, I planned what I would say to make him feel remorseful for the way he had broken his covenants and embarrassed the Church. But as I sat looking at him, I heard a voice in my mind say, just as clearly as if someone were speaking to me, "I'm going to let you see him as I see him." And then, for a brief moment, his whole appearance changed to me. I saw not a dazed young man but a bright, noble son of God. I suddenly felt the Lord's love for him. That vision changed our conversation. It also changed me.

I learned important lessons from these experiences walking with the Lord in doing His work. I would like to share with you three of them. The first is that God notices and will support even the newest and youngest deacon. You need never feel that you are too small or too insignificant for Him to take notice of you and the service you are giving in His name.

The second lesson is that the Lord's work is not just to solve problems; it is to build people. So as you walk with Him in priesthood service, you may find that sometimes what seems like the most efficient solution is not the Lord's preferred solution because it does not allow people to grow. If you listen, He will teach you His ways. Remember that God's work and glory is not simply to run an effective organization; it is "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). This is, after all, why He gives His priesthood authority to flawed mortals like you and me and invites us to participate in His work. Our progress *is* His work!

Now the third lesson: Walking with the Savior in priesthood service will change the way you look at others. He will teach you to see them through His eyes, which means seeing past an outward appearance and into the heart (see 1 Samuel 16:7). This is how the Savior was able to see Simon not as an impulsive fisherman but as Peter, the rock-solid future leader of His Church (see Luke 5:1–11). This is how He was able to

