

Christ: The Light That Shines in Darkness

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If you feel that the beacon of your testimony is sputtering and darkness is closing in, take courage. Keep your promises to God.

My office in the Relief Society Building has a perfect view of the Salt Lake Temple. Every night, as regular as clockwork, the outdoor temple lights turn on at dusk. The temple is a steady, reassuring beacon just outside my window.

One night this past February, my office remained exceptionally dim as the sun went down. As I looked out the window, the temple was dark. The lights had not turned on. I felt suddenly somber. I couldn't see the temple spires I had glimpsed every evening for years.

Seeing darkness where I expected to see light reminded me that one of the fundamental needs we have in order to grow is to stay connected to our source of light—Jesus Christ. He is the source of our power, the Light and Life of the World. Without a strong connection to Him, we begin to spiritually die. Knowing that, Satan tries to exploit the worldly pressures we all face. He works to dim our light, short-circuit the connection, cut off the power supply, leaving us alone in the dark. These pressures are common conditions in mortality, but Satan works hard to isolate us and tell us we are the only one experiencing them.

Some of Us Are Paralyzed with Grief

When tragedies overtake us, when life hurts so much we can't breathe, when we've taken a beating like the man on the road to Jericho and been left for dead, Jesus comes along and pours oil into our wounds, lifts us tenderly up, takes us to an inn, looks after us.¹ To those of us in grief, He says, "I will ... ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, ... that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions."² **Christ heals wounds.**

Some of Us Are Just So Tired

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: "It is not intended that we run faster than we have strength. ... But [in spite of] that, I know ... many of you run [very,] very fast and that [the] energy and emotional supply sometimes registers close to empty."³ When expectations overwhelm us, we can step back and ask Heavenly Father what to let go of. Part of our life experience is learning what not to do. But even so, sometimes life can be exhausting. Jesus assures us, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁴

Christ is willing to join with us in the yoke and pull in order to lighten our burdens. **Christ is rest.**

Some of Us Feel We Don't Fit the Traditional Mold

For various reasons, we don't feel accepted or acceptable. The New Testament shows the great efforts Jesus made to reach out to all kinds of people: lepers, tax collectors, children, Galileans, harlots, women, Pharisees, sinners, Samaritans, widows, Roman soldiers, adulterers, the ritually unclean. In almost every story, He is reaching someone who wasn't traditionally accepted in society.

Luke 19 tells the story of the chief tax collector in Jericho named Zacchaeus. He climbed a tree in order to see Jesus walk by. Zacchaeus was employed by the Roman government and viewed as corrupt and a sinner. Jesus saw him up in the tree and called to him, saying, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house."⁵ And when Jesus saw the goodness of Zacchaeus's heart and the things he did for others, He accepted his offering, saying, "This day is salvation come to this house, [for] he also is a son of Abraham."⁶

Christ tenderly told the Nephites, "I have commanded that none of you should go away."⁷ Peter had that powerful epiphany in Acts 10 when he declared, "God hath shewed me that I should not call any [person] common or unclean."⁸ It is an unwavering requirement of Christian disciples and Latter-day Saints to show true love to one another.⁹ Jesus extends the same kind of invitation to us that He did to Zacchaeus: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if [you] hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to [you], and will sup with [you], and [you] with me."¹⁰ **Christ sees us in our tree.**

Some of Us Are Splintering with Questions

Not many years ago, I was weighed down and irritated with questions I could not find answers to. Early one Saturday morning, I had a little dream. In the dream I could see a gazebo, and I understood that I should go stand in it. It had five arches encircling it, but the windows were made of stone. I complained in the dream, not wanting to go inside because it was so claustrophobic. Then the thought came into my mind that the brother of Jared had patiently melted stones into clear glass. Glass is stone that has undergone a state change. When the Lord touched the stones for the brother of Jared, they glowed with light in the dark ships.¹¹ Suddenly I was filled with a desire to be in that gazebo more than any other place. It was the very place—the only place—for me to truly "see." The questions that were bothering me didn't go away, but brighter in my mind was the question after I woke up: "How are you going to increase your faith, like the brother of Jared, so your stones can be turned into light?"¹²

Our mortal brains are made to seek understanding and meaning in tidy bundles. I don't know all the reasons why the veil over mortality is so thick. This is not the stage in our eternal development where we have all answers. It is the stage where we develop our assurance (or sometimes our hope) in the evidence of things not seen. Assurance comes in ways that aren't always easy to analyze, but there is light in our darkness. Jesus said, "I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world."¹³ For those seeking truth, it may seem at first to be the foolish claustrophobia of windows made of stone. But with patience and faithful questions, Jesus can transform our windows of stone to glass and light.

Christ is light to see.

Some of Us Feel We Can Never Be Good Enough

The scarlet dye of the Old Testament was not only colorful but also colorfast, meaning that its vivid color stuck to the wool and would not fade no matter how many times it was washed.¹⁴ Satan wields this reasoning like a club: white wool stained scarlet can never go back to being white. But Jesus Christ declares, "My ways [are] higher than your ways,"¹⁵ and the miracle of His grace is that when we repent of our sins, His scarlet blood returns us to purity. It isn't logical, but it is nevertheless true.

Photograph from iStock.com/iinwibisono

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."¹⁶ The Lord says emphatically: he or she "who has repented of ... sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."¹⁷ In essence: Come, let us reason together.¹⁸ You made mistakes; all come short.¹⁹ Come unto me and repent.²⁰ I will remember the sin no more.²¹ You can be whole again.²² I have a work for you to do.²³ **Christ makes wool white.**

But what are the practical steps? What is the key to reconnecting to the power of Jesus Christ when we are flickering? President Russell M. Nelson said it very simply: "The key is to make and keep sacred covenants. ... It is not a complicated way."²⁴ Make Christ the center of your life.²⁵

If you feel that the beacon of your testimony is sputtering and darkness is closing in, take courage. Keep your promises to God. Ask your questions. Patiently melt stone to glass. Turn to Jesus Christ, who loves you still.

Jesus said, "I am the light [that] shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."²⁶ That means no matter how hard it tries, the darkness cannot put out that light. Ever. You can trust that His light will be there for you.

We, or people we love, may temporarily go dark. In the case of the Salt Lake Temple, the facilities manager, Brother Val White, got a call almost immediately. People had noticed. What was wrong with the temple lights? First, the staff went in person to every electrical panel in the temple and manually turned the lights back on. Then they replaced the batteries in the automatic power supply and tested them to find out what had failed.

It's hard to get the lights back on by yourself. We need friends. We need each other. Just like the temple facilities staff, we can help each other by showing up in person, recharging our spiritual batteries, repairing what went wrong.

Our individual light may be like only one light bulb on a tree. But we still shine our small light, and all together, like Temple Square at Christmastime, we attract millions of people to the house of the Lord. Best of all, as President Nelson has encouraged, we can bring the Savior's light to ourselves and the people important to us by the simple act of keeping our covenants. In a variety of ways, the Lord rewards that faithful act with power and with joy.²⁷

I testify you are beloved. The Lord knows how hard you are trying. You are making progress. Keep going. He sees all your hidden sacrifices and counts them to your good and the good of those you love. Your work is not in vain. You are not alone. His very name, Emmanuel, means "God with us."²⁸ He is surely with you.

Take a few more steps on the covenant path, even if it's too dark to see very far. The lights will come back on. I testify of the truth in Jesus's words, and they are filled with light: "Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."²⁹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

