

Hear Him

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Our Father knows that when we are surrounded by uncertainty and fear, what will help us the very most is to hear His Son.

My dear brothers and sisters, how thankful I am that through the use of technology we have been able to meet together and worship on this Sunday morning. How blessed we are to know that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth!

In the past several weeks, most of us have experienced disruptions in our personal lives. Earthquakes, fires, floods, plagues, and their aftermaths have disrupted routines and caused shortages of food, staples, and savings.

Amidst all of this, we commend you and thank you for choosing to hear the word of the Lord during this time of turmoil by joining with us for general conference. The increasing darkness that accompanies tribulation makes the light of Jesus Christ shine ever brighter. Just think of the good each of us can do during this time of global upheaval. Your love of and faith in the Savior may very well be the catalyst for someone to discover the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the past two years, Sister Nelson and I have met with thousands of you around the world. We have convened with you in outdoor arenas and in hotel ballrooms. In each location, I have felt that I was in the presence of the Lord's elect and that I was seeing the gathering of Israel occur before my eyes.

We live in the day that “our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation.”¹ We have front-row seats to *witness live* what the prophet Nephi saw *only in vision*, that “the power of the Lamb of God” would descend “upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”²

You, my brothers and sisters, are among those men, women, and children whom Nephi saw. Think of that!

Regardless of where you live or what your circumstances are, the Lord Jesus Christ is *your* Savior, and God's prophet Joseph Smith is *your* prophet. He was foreordained before the foundation of the earth to be the prophet of this last dispensation, when “nothing shall be withheld”³ from the Saints. Revelation continues to flow from the Lord during this ongoing process of restoration.

What does it mean for you that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth?

It means that you and your family can be sealed together forever! It means that because you have been baptized by one who has authority from Jesus Christ and have been confirmed a member of His Church, you can enjoy the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. He will guide and protect you. It means you will never be left comfortless or without access to the power of God to help you. It means that priesthood power can bless you as you receive essential ordinances and make covenants with God and keep them. What an anchor to our souls are these truths, especially during these times when the tempest is raging.

The Book of Mormon chronicles the classic rise and fall of two major civilizations. Their history demonstrates how easy it is for a majority of the people to forget God, reject warnings of the Lord's prophets, and seek power, popularity, and pleasures of the flesh.⁴ Repeatedly, past prophets have declared "great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe."⁵

It is no different in our day. Through the years, great and marvelous things have been heard from dedicated pulpits across the earth. Yet most people do *not* embrace these truths—either because they do not know where to look for them⁶ or because they are listening to those who do not have the whole truth or because they have rejected truth in favor of worldly pursuits.

The adversary is clever. For millennia he has been making good look evil and evil look good.⁷ His messages tend to be loud, bold, and boastful.

However, messages from our Heavenly Father are strikingly different. He communicates simply, quietly, and with such stunning plainness that we cannot misunderstand Him.⁸

For example, whenever He has introduced His Only Begotten Son to mortals upon the earth, He has done so with remarkably few words. On the Mount of Transfiguration to Peter, James, and John, God said, "This is my beloved Son: hear him."⁹ His words to the Nephites in ancient Bountiful were "Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him."¹⁰ And to Joseph Smith, in that profound declaration that opened this dispensation, God simply said, "*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"¹¹

Now, my dear brothers and sisters, consider the fact that in these three instances just mentioned, just before the Father introduced the Son, the people involved were in a state of fear and, to some degree, desperation.

The Apostles were afraid when they saw Jesus Christ encircled by a cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The Nephites were afraid because they had been through destruction and darkness for several days.

Joseph Smith was in the grips of a force of darkness just before the heavens opened.

Our Father knows that when we are surrounded by uncertainty and fear, what will help us the very most is to hear His Son.

Because when we seek to hear—truly hear—His Son, we will be guided to know what to do in any circumstance.

The very first word in the Doctrine and Covenants is *hearken*.¹² It means “to listen with the intent to obey.”¹³ To *hearken* means to “hear Him”—to *hear* what the Savior says and then to *heed* His counsel. In those two words—“Hear Him”—God gives us the pattern for success, happiness, and joy in this life. We are to *hear* the words of the Lord, *hearken* to them, and *heed* what He has told us!

As we seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ, our efforts to *hear Him* need to be ever more intentional. It takes conscious and consistent effort to fill our daily lives with His words, His teachings, His truths.

We simply cannot rely upon information we bump into on social media. With billions of words online and in a marketing-saturated world constantly infiltrated by noisy, nefarious efforts of the adversary, where *can* we go to hear Him?

We can go to the scriptures. They teach us about Jesus Christ and His gospel, the magnitude of His Atonement, and our Father’s great plan of happiness and redemption. Daily immersion in the word of God is crucial for spiritual survival, especially in these days of increasing upheaval. As we feast on the words of Christ daily, the words of Christ will tell us how to respond to difficulties we never thought we would face.

We can also *hear Him* in the temple. The house of the Lord *is* a house of learning. There the Lord teaches in His own way. There each ordinance teaches about the Savior. There we learn how to part the veil and communicate more clearly with heaven. There we learn how to rebuke the adversary and draw upon the Lord’s priesthood power to strengthen us and those we love. How eager each of us should be to seek refuge there.

When these temporary COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, please schedule regular time to worship and serve in the temple. Every minute of that time will bless you and your family in ways *nothing* else can. Take time to ponder what you hear and feel when you are there. Ask the Lord to teach you how to open the heavens to bless your life and the lives of those you love and serve.

While worshipping in the temple is presently not possible, I invite you to increase your participation in family history, including family history research and indexing. I promise that as you increase your time in temple and family history work, you will increase and improve your ability to hear Him.

We also *hear Him* more clearly as we refine our ability to recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. It has never been more imperative to know how the Spirit speaks to you than right now. In the Godhead, the Holy Ghost is the messenger. He will bring thoughts to your mind which the Father and Son want you to receive. He is the Comforter. He will bring a feeling of peace to your heart. He testifies of truth and will confirm what is true as you hear and read the word of the Lord.

I renew my plea for you to do *whatever* it takes to increase your spiritual capacity to receive personal revelation.

Doing so will help you know how to move ahead with your life, what to do during times of crisis, and how to discern and avoid the temptations and the deceptions of the adversary.

And, finally, we *hear Him* as we heed the words of prophets, seers, and revelators. Ordained Apostles of Jesus Christ always testify of Him. They point the way as we make our way through the heart-wrenching maze of our mortal experiences.

What will happen as you more intentionally hear, hearken, and heed what the Savior has said and what He is saying now through His prophets? I promise that you will be blessed with additional power to deal with temptation, struggles, and weakness. I promise miracles in your marriage, family relationships, and daily work. And I promise that your capacity to feel joy will increase even if turbulence increases in your life.

This April 2020 general conference is our time to commemorate an event that changed the world. As we anticipated this 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith's First Vision, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles wondered what *we* might do to commemorate appropriately this singular event.

That theophany initiated the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and ushered in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

We wondered if a monument should be erected. But as we considered the unique historic and international impact of that First Vision, we felt impressed to create a monument not of granite or stone but of words—words of solemn and sacred proclamation—written, not to be carved in “tables of stone” but rather to be etched in the “fleshy tables” of our hearts.¹⁴

Since the Church was organized, only five proclamations have been issued, with the last being “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” presented by President Gordon B. Hinckley in 1995.

Now as we contemplate this significant time in the history of the world and the Lord's charge to gather scattered Israel in preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, we, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles, issue the following proclamation. Its title is “The Restoration of the Fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: A Bicentennial Proclamation to the World.” It is authored by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is dated April 2020. To prepare for today, I previously recorded this proclamation in the Sacred Grove, where Joseph Smith first saw the Father and the Son.

“We solemnly proclaim that God loves His children in every nation of the world. God the Father has given us the divine birth, the incomparable life, and the infinite atoning sacrifice of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. By the power of the Father, Jesus

rose again and gained the victory over death. He is our Savior, our Exemplar, and our Redeemer.

“Two hundred years ago, on a beautiful spring morning in 1820, young Joseph Smith, seeking to know which church to join, went into the woods to pray near his home in upstate New York, USA. He had questions regarding the salvation of his soul and trusted that God would direct him.

“In humility, we declare that in answer to his prayer, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph and inaugurated the ‘restitution of all things’ (Acts 3:21) as foretold in the Bible. In this vision, he learned that following the death of the original Apostles, Christ’s New Testament Church was lost from the earth. Joseph would be instrumental in its return.

“We affirm that under the direction of the Father and the Son, heavenly messengers came to instruct Joseph and reestablish the Church of Jesus Christ. The resurrected John the Baptist restored the authority to baptize by immersion for the remission of sins. Three of the original twelve Apostles—Peter, James, and John—restored the apostleship and keys of priesthood authority. Others came as well, including Elijah, who restored the authority to join families together forever in eternal relationships that transcend death.

“We further witness that Joseph Smith was given the gift and power of God to translate an ancient record: the Book of Mormon—Another Testament of Jesus Christ. Pages of this sacred text include an account of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ among people in the Western Hemisphere soon after His Resurrection. It teaches of life’s purpose and explains the doctrine of Christ, which is central to that purpose. As a companion scripture to the Bible, the Book of Mormon testifies that all human beings are sons and daughters of a loving Father in Heaven, that He has a divine plan for our lives, and that His Son, Jesus Christ, speaks today as well as in days of old.

“We declare that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, organized on April 6, 1830, is Christ’s New Testament Church restored. This Church is anchored in the perfect life of its chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ, and in His infinite Atonement and literal Resurrection. Jesus Christ has once again called Apostles and has given them priesthood authority. He invites all of us to come unto Him and His Church, to receive the Holy Ghost, the ordinances of salvation, and to gain enduring joy.

“Two hundred years have now elapsed since this Restoration was initiated by God the Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Millions throughout the world have embraced a knowledge of these prophesied events.

“We gladly declare that the promised Restoration goes forward through continuing revelation. The earth will never again be the same, as God will ‘gather together in one all things in Christ’ (Ephesians 1:10).

“With reverence and gratitude, we as His Apostles invite all to know—as we do—that the heavens are open. We affirm that God is making known His will for His

beloved sons and daughters. We testify that those who prayerfully study the message of the Restoration and act in faith will be blessed to gain their own witness of its divinity and of its purpose to prepare the world for the promised Second Coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Beloved brothers and sisters, that is our bicentennial proclamation to the world regarding the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness. It has been translated into 12 languages. Other languages will soon follow. It will be available immediately on the Church website, from which you may obtain a copy. Study it privately and with your family members and friends. Ponder the truths and think of the impact those truths will have on your life if you will hear them, hearken to them, and heed the commandments and covenants that accompany them.

I know that Joseph Smith is the foreordained prophet whom the Lord chose to open this last dispensation. Through him the Lord’s Church was restored to the earth. Joseph sealed his testimony with his blood. How I love and honor him!

God lives! Jesus is the Christ! His Church has been restored! He and His Father, our Heavenly Father, are watching over us. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.