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All Nations, Kindreds, and Tongues

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We can become, in our own way, part of the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecies and promises—part of the gospel blessing the world.

Dear brothers and sisters, I recently officiated in a temple sealing, following COVID-19 guidelines. With the bride and groom, both faithful returned missionaries, were their parents and all their siblings. This was not easy. The bride is the ninth of ten children. Her nine siblings sat in order, oldest to youngest, socially distanced of course.

The family had sought to be good neighbors wherever they lived. However, one community had been unwelcoming—because, the bride's mother said, their family were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The family did everything to make friends at school, contribute, and be accepted, but to no avail. The family prayed and prayed hearts would soften.

One night, the family felt their prayers were answered, though in a very unexpected way. Their house caught fire and burned to the ground. But something else happened. The fire softened their neighbors' hearts.

Their neighbors and local school gathered clothes, shoes, and other necessities needed by the family, who had lost everything. Kindness opened understanding. It was not the way the family hoped or expected their prayers to be answered. However, they express gratitude for what they learned through hard experiences and unexpected answers to heartfelt prayers.

Truly, for those with faithful hearts and eyes to see, the Lord's tender mercies are manifest amidst life's challenges. Faithfully met challenges and sacrifice do bring the blessings of heaven. In this mortality, we may lose or wait for some things for a time, but in the end we will find what matters most.¹ That is His promise.²

Our 2020 bicentennial proclamation begins with the profoundly inclusive promise that "God loves His children in every nation of the world."³ To each of us in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people,⁴ God promises, covenants, and invites us to come partake of His abundant joy and goodness.

God's love for all people is affirmed throughout scripture.⁵ That love encompasses the Abrahamic covenant, gathering His scattered children,⁶ and His plan of happiness in our lives.

In the household of faith there are to be no strangers, no foreigners,⁷ no rich and poor,⁸ no outside "others." As "fellowcitizens with the saints,"⁹ we are invited to change the world for the better, from the inside out, one person, one family, one neighborhood at a time.

This happens when we live and share the gospel. Early in this dispensation, the Prophet Joseph received a remarkable prophecy that Heavenly Father desires everyone everywhere to discover God's love and experience His power to grow and change.

That prophecy was received here, at the Smith family log home in Palmyra, New York.¹⁰

Completed in 1998, the Smith home is reconstructed on its original foundation. The second-story bedroom occupies the same 18- by 30- by 10-foot (5.5 by 9 by 3m) physical space where Moroni, as a glorious messenger from God, came to the young Joseph on the evening of September 21, 1823.¹¹

You remember what the Prophet Joseph recounted:

"[Moroni] said ... God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues. ...

"[Moroni] said there was a book deposited, ... that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it."¹²

Here we pause. We worship God the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, not the Prophet Joseph nor any mortal man or woman.

Yet consider how the prophecies God gives His servants are fulfilled.¹³ Some are fulfilled earlier, some later, but all are fulfilled.¹⁴ As we hearken to the Lord's spirit

of prophecy, we can become, in our own way, part of the fulfillment of His prophecies and promises—part of the gospel blessing the world.

In 1823, Joseph was an unknown 17-year-old boy living in an obscure village in a newly independent country. Unless it were true, how would he imagine to say he would be an instrument in God’s work and translate by God’s gift and power sacred scripture that would become known everywhere?

Yet, because it is true, you and I can witness that prophecy being fulfilled even as we are invited to help bring it to pass.

Brothers and sisters, across the world, each of us participating in this October 2020 general conference is among the nations, kindreds, and tongues spoken of.

Today, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints live in 196 nations and territories, with 3,446 Church stakes in 90 of them.¹⁵ We represent both geographic breadth and centers of strength.

In 1823, who would have imagined that in the year 2020 there would be three countries each with more than a million members of this Church—the United States, Mexico, and Brazil?

Or 23 countries each with more than 100,000 members of the Church—three in North America, fourteen in Central and South America, one in Europe, four in Asia, and one in Africa?¹⁶

President Russell M. Nelson calls the Book of Mormon “a miraculous miracle.”¹⁷ Its witnesses testify, “Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.”¹⁸ Today, general conference is available in 100 languages. President Nelson has testified of Jesus Christ and His restored gospel in 138 nations and counting.

Beginning with 5,000 printed copies of the 1830 first edition of the Book of Mormon, some 192 million copies of all or part of the Book of Mormon have been published in 112 languages. Book of Mormon translations are also widely available digitally. Current Book of Mormon translations include most of the 23 world languages spoken by 50 million people or more, collectively the native tongues of some 4.1 billion people.¹⁹

By small and simple means—in which we are each invited to participate—great things are brought to pass.

For example, at a stake conference in Monroe, Utah, population 2,200, I asked how many had served missions. Nearly every hand went up. In recent years, from that one stake, 564 missionaries have served in all 50 U.S. states and 53 countries—on every continent except Antarctica.

Speaking of Antarctica, even in Ushuaia, at the southern tip of Argentina, I saw prophecy being fulfilled as our missionaries shared the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in a place called “the end of the earth.”²⁰

The mural formed by the covers of our four volumes of *Saints*²¹ depicts a global tapestry of the fruits of gospel living coming to faithful Saints everywhere. Our Church history is anchored in the lived testimony and gospel journey of each member, including Mary Whitmer, the faithful sister to whom Moroni showed the Book of Mormon plates.²²

Coming in January 2021, our three new global Church magazines—the *Friend, For the Strength of Youth*, and the *Liahona*—invite all to belong and share experiences and testimony in our worldwide community of faith.²³

Brothers and sisters, as we increase our faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, receive the blessings found in living restored gospel truths and sacred covenants, and study, ponder, and share about the ongoing Restoration, we participate in fulfilling prophecy.

We are changing ourselves and the world in a gospel pattern that blesses lives everywhere.

An African sister says, “My husband’s priesthood service makes him more patient and kind. And I am becoming a better wife and mother.”

A now-respected international business consultant in Central America says before he discovered God’s restored gospel, he lived aimlessly on the street. Now he and his family have found identity, purpose, and strength.

A young boy in South America raises chickens and sells their eggs to help buy windows for the house his family is building. He pays his tithing first. He will literally see the windows of heaven open.

In Four Corners, a community in the southwestern United States, a Native American family grows a beautiful rose bush to blossom in the desert, symbolic of gospel faith and self-reliance.

A survivor of bitter civil war, a brother in Southeast Asia despaired that life had no meaning. He found hope in a dream in which a former classmate held a sacrament tray and testified of saving ordinances and the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father invites us everywhere to feel His love, to learn and grow through education, honorable work, self-reliant service, and patterns of goodness and happiness we find in His restored Church.

As we come to trust God, sometimes through pleading in our darkest, loneliest, most uncertain moments, we learn He knows us better and loves us more than we know or love ourselves.

This is why we need God’s help to create lasting justice, equality, fairness, and peace in our homes and communities. Our truest, deepest, most authentic narrative, place, and belonging come when we feel God’s redeeming love, seek grace and miracles through His Son’s Atonement, and establish lasting relationships by sacred covenants.

Religious goodness and wisdom are needed in today's cluttered, noisy, polluted world. How else can we refresh, inspire, and edify the human spirit?²⁴

Planting trees in Haiti is only one among hundreds of examples of people coming together to do good. The local community, including 1,800 members of our Church, which donated the trees, gathered to plant nearly 25,000 trees.²⁵ This multiyear reforestation project has already planted over 121,000 trees. It anticipates planting tens of thousands more.

This united effort provides shade, conserves soil, abates future floods. It beautifies neighborhoods, builds community, satisfies taste, and nourishes the soul. If you ask Haitians who will harvest the fruit from these trees, they say, "Whoever is hungry."

Some 80 percent of the world's population are religiously affiliated.²⁶ Religious communities readily respond to immediate needs after natural disasters as well as to chronic needs for food, shelter, education, literacy, and employment training. Across the world, our members, friends, and Church help communities support refugees and provide water, sanitation, handicap mobility, and vision care—one person, one village, one tree at a time.²⁷ Everywhere, we seek to be good parents and good citizens, to contribute in our neighborhoods and societies, including through Latter-day Saint Charities.²⁸

God gives us moral agency—and moral accountability. Declares the Lord, "I, the Lord God, make you free, therefore [you] are free indeed."²⁹ In proclaiming "liberty to the captives,"³⁰ the Lord promises His Atonement and gospel path can break temporal and spiritual bonds.³¹ Mercifully, this redemptive freedom extends to those who have passed from mortality.

Some years ago, a priest in Central America told me he was studying Latter-day Saint "baptism for deceased persons." "It does seem just," the priest said, "that God would offer every person opportunity to receive baptism, no matter when or where they lived, except little children, who 'are alive in Christ.'³² The Apostle Paul," the priest noted, "speaks of the dead awaiting baptism and resurrection."³³ Vicarious temple ordinances promise all nations, kindreds, and tongues that no one need "remain a slave of death, of hell, or of the grave."³⁴

As we discover God, sometimes unexpected answers to prayers take us from the street, bring us to community, chase darkness from our souls, and guide us to find spiritual refuge and belonging in the goodness of His covenants and abiding love.

Great things often begin small, but God's miracles are manifest daily. How grateful we are for the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and His revealed doctrine, ordinances, and covenants found in His restored Church, called in His name.

May we joyfully accept God's invitation to receive and help fulfill His promised and prophesied blessings in all nations, kindreds, and tongues, I pray in the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

