

Room in the Inn

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In this Easter season, Jesus Christ invites us to become, like Him, a good Samaritan, to make His Inn (His Church) a refuge for all.

Dear brothers and sisters, although he passed away 20 years ago, there are times I miss my father. Easter promises I will see him again.

When I was in graduate school in England, my father came to visit. His father's heart knew I missed home.

My father loved adventure except in food. Even in France, noted for its cuisine, he would say, "Let's eat Chinese food." A long-serving patriarch in the Church, my father was spiritual and compassionate. One night, as emergency vehicles with loud sirens raced through Paris, he said, "Gerrit, those cries are the wounds of a city."

On that trip, I felt other cries and wounds. A young woman was selling ice cream from a small pushcart. Her wafer cones were just the size for a single scoop of ice cream. For some reason, a large man confronted the young woman. Yelling and pushing, he tipped over her cart, spilling her ice-cream cones. There was nothing I could do as he crushed the cones with his boots. I can still see the young woman on her knees in the street, trying to save broken wafer pieces, tears of anguish streaming down her face. Her image haunts me, a reminder of the unkindness, uncaring, misunderstanding we too often inflict on each other.

On another afternoon, near Paris, my father and I visited the great cathedral at Chartres. Malcolm Miller,¹ a world expert on the cathedral, pointed out three sets of Chartres stained-glass windows. He said they tell a story.

The first windows show Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden.

The second recount the parable of the good Samaritan.

The third depict the Lord's Second Coming.

Taken together, these stained-glass windows can describe our eternal journey. They invite us to welcome all with room in His inn.²

Like Adam and Eve, we come into a world of thorns and thistles.³

On our dusty roads to Jericho, we are beset upon, wounded, and left in pain.⁴

Though we should help each other, too often we pass to the other side of the road, for whatever reason.

However, with compassion, the Good Samaritan stops and binds our wounds with wine and oil. Symbols of the sacrament and other ordinances, the wine and oil point us to the spiritual healing in Jesus Christ.⁵ The Good Samaritan puts us on His own donkey or, in some stained-glass accounts, carries us on His shoulders. He brings us to the inn, which can represent His Church. At the Inn, the Good Samaritan says, “Take care of him; ... when I come again, I will repay thee.”⁶ The Good Samaritan, a symbol of our Savior, promises to return, this time in majesty and glory.

In this Easter season, Jesus Christ invites us to become, like Him, a good Samaritan, to make His Inn (His Church) a refuge for all from life’s bruises and storms.⁷ We prepare for His promised Second Coming as each day we do unto “the least of these”⁸ as we would unto Him. “The least of these” is each of us.

As we come with the Good Samaritan to the Inn, we learn five things about Jesus Christ and ourselves.

First, we come to the Inn as we are, with the foibles and imperfections we each have. Yet we all have something needed to contribute. Our journey to God is often found together. We belong as united community—whether confronting pandemics, storms, wildfires, droughts or quietly meeting daily needs. We receive inspiration as we counsel together, listening to each person, including each sister, and the Spirit.

As our hearts change and we receive His image in our countenance,⁹ we see Him and ourselves in His Church. In Him, we find clarity, not dissonance. In Him, we find cause to do good, reason to be good, and increasing capacity to become better. In Him, we discover abiding faith, liberating selflessness, caring change, and trust in God. In His Inn, we find and deepen our personal relationship with God, our Father, and Jesus Christ.

He trusts us to help make the Inn the place He needs it to be. As we offer our talents and best efforts, His spiritual gifts also strengthen and bless.¹⁰

A Spanish language interpreter told me, “Elder Gong, I knew by the Spirit what you were going to say so I could translate,” this faithful brother said, “by the gift of tongues.”

Gifts of faith and assurance come, manifest differently in different situations. One dear sister received spiritual comfort as her husband passed away from COVID-19. She said, “I know my dear husband and I will be together again.” In a different COVID situation, another dear sister said, “I felt I should plead with the Lord and the doctors to give my husband just a little more time.”

Second, He entreats us to make His Inn a place of grace and space, where each can gather, with room for all. As disciples of Jesus Christ, all are equal, with no second-class groups.

All are welcome to attend sacrament meetings, other Sunday meetings, and social events.¹¹ We reverently worship our Savior, thoughtful and considerate of each other. We see and acknowledge each person. We smile, sit with those sitting alone, learn names, including of new converts, returning brothers and sisters, young women and young men, each dear Primary child.

Imagining ourselves in their place, we welcome friends, visitors, new move-ins, busy individuals pulled in too many directions. We mourn, rejoice, and are there for each other. When we fall short of our ideals and are rushed, unaware, judgmental, or prejudiced, we seek each other's forgiveness and do better.

A family from Africa now living in the United States said, "From the first day, Church members were friendly and welcoming. Everyone made us feel at home. No one looked down on us." The father said, "The Holy Bible teaches gospel fruits come from gospel roots." "And the missionaries," the father and mother said, "we want our son and daughter to grow up like those missionaries." Brothers and sisters, may we each warmly welcome all to His Inn.

Third, in His Inn we learn perfection is in Jesus Christ, not in the perfectionism of the world. Unreal and unrealistic, the world's "insta-perfect" filtered perfectionism can make us feel inadequate, captive to swipes, likes, or double taps. In contrast, our Savior, Jesus Christ, knows everything about us we don't want anyone else to know, and He still loves us. His is a gospel of second and third chances, made possible by His atoning sacrifice.¹² He invites each of us to be a good Samaritan, less judgmental and more forgiving of ourselves and of each other, even as we strive more fully to keep His commandments.

We help ourselves as we help each other. A family I know lived near a busy road. Travelers often stopped to ask for help. Early one morning the family heard loud pounding on their door. Tired and worried who it would be at 2:00 a.m., they wondered if, just this once, someone else could help. As the insistent knocking continued, they heard, "Fire—there's a fire in the back of your house!" Good Samaritans help each other.

Fourth, at His Inn we become part of a gospel community centered in Jesus Christ, anchored in restored truth, living prophets and apostles, and another testament of Jesus Christ—the Book of Mormon. He brings us to His Inn and also to His house—the holy temple. The house of the Lord is a place where, as with the wounded man on the road to Jericho, the Good Samaritan can cleanse and clothe us, prepare us to return to God's presence, and unite us eternally in God's family. His temples are open to all who live His gospel with faith and obedience.

Temple rejoicing includes gospel unity amidst diverse heritages, cultures, languages, and generations. At the groundbreaking for the Taylorsville Utah Temple, 17-year-old Max Harker shared a legacy of family faith begun six generations earlier by his great-great-great-grandfather Joseph Harker and his wife, Susannah Sneath. In the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, we can each become a strong link in our family generations.

Finally, fifth, we rejoice that God loves His children in our different backgrounds and circumstances, in every nation, kindred, and tongue, with room for all in His Inn.

Over the past 40 years, Church members have become increasingly international. Since 1998, more Church members have lived outside than inside the United States and Canada. By 2025, we anticipate as many Church members may live in Latin America as in the United States and Canada. The gathering of Father Lehi's faithful descendants is fulfilling prophecy. Faithful Saints, including in the pioneer corridor, remain a reservoir of devotion and service for the worldwide Church.

Also, the majority of adult Church members are now unmarried, widowed, or divorced. This is a significant change. It includes more than half our Relief Society sisters and more than half our adult priesthood brothers. This demographic pattern has been the case in the worldwide Church since 1992 and in the Church in the United States and Canada since 2019.

Our standing before the Lord and in His Church is not a matter of our marital status but of our becoming faithful and valiant disciples of Jesus Christ.¹³ Adults want to be seen as adults and to be responsible and contribute as adults. Disciples of Jesus Christ come from everywhere, in every shape, size, hue, and age, each with talents, righteous desires, and immense capacities to bless and serve. We seek daily to follow Jesus Christ with faith unto repentance¹⁴ and enduring joy.

During this life, we sometimes wait upon the Lord. We may not yet be where we hope and wish to be in the future. A devout sister says, "Waiting faithfully upon the Lord for His blessings is a holy position. It must not be met with pity, patronizing, or judgment but instead with sacred honor."¹⁵ In the meantime, we live now, not waiting for life to begin.

Isaiah promises, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."¹⁶

Our Good Samaritan promises to return. Miracles occur when we care for each other as He would. When we come with broken hearts and contrite spirits,¹⁷ we can find voice in Jesus Christ and be encircled in His understanding arms of safety.¹⁸ Sacred ordinances offer covenant belonging and "the power of godliness"¹⁹ to sanctify inner intent and outward action. With His loving-kindness and long-suffering, His Church becomes our Inn.

As we create room in His Inn, welcoming all, our Good Samaritan can heal us on our dusty mortal roads. With perfect love, our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, promise "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come"²⁰—"that where I am ye shall be also."²¹ I so gratefully witness and testify in the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.