

What We Are Learning and Will Never Forget

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My dear brethren, I have looked forward to this virtual meeting with you. The last time we held a priesthood session of general conference was in April 2019. Much has happened in the past two years! Some of you have lost loved ones. Others have lost jobs, livelihood, or health. Still others have lost a sense of peace or hope for the future. My heart goes out to each one of you who has suffered these or other losses. I pray constantly that the Lord will comfort you. As you continue to let God prevail in your life, I know that He is just as optimistic about your future as He has ever been.

Amid the *losses* we have experienced, there are also some things we have *found*. Some have found deeper faith in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Many have found a fresh perspective on life—even an eternal perspective. You may have found stronger relationships with your loved ones and with the Lord. I hope you have found an increased ability to *hear Him* and receive personal revelation. Difficult trials often provide opportunities to grow that would not have come in any other way.

Think back on the past two years. How have you grown? What have you learned? You might initially wish you could go back to 2019 and stay there! But if you look at your life prayerfully, I believe you will see many ways in which the Lord has been guiding you through this time of hardship, helping you to become a more devoted, more converted man—a true man of God.

I know the Lord has great and marvelous plans for us—individually and collectively. With compassion and patience, He says:

“Ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath ... prepared for you;

“And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along.”¹

My dear brothers, I testify that He has been, and *is*, indeed leading us along, as we seek to hear Him. He wants us to grow and to learn, even through—perhaps *especially* through—adversity.

Adversity is a great teacher. What have *you* learned in the past two years that you always want to remember? Your answers will be unique to you, but may I suggest four lessons I hope we have all learned and will never forget.

Lesson 1: The Home Is the Center of Faith and Worship

Often when the Lord warns us about the perils of the last days, He counsels thus: “Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved.”² These “holy places” certainly include the Lord’s temples and meetinghouses. But as our ability to gather in these places has been restricted in varying degrees, we have learned that one of the holiest of places on earth is the home—yes, even *your* home.

Brethren, you bear the priesthood of God. “The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven.”³ You and your family have received priesthood ordinances. It is “in the ordinances [of the priesthood that] the power of godliness is manifest.”⁴ That power is available to you and your family *in your own home* as you keep the covenants you have made.⁵

Just 185 years ago, this very day, April 3, 1836, Elijah restored the keys of the priesthood that allow our families to be sealed together forever. That is why it felt so good to administer the sacrament in your home. How do you think it affected your family members to see you—their father, grandfather, husband, son, or brother—administer this holy ordinance? What will you do to retain that sacred feeling in your family?

You may feel that there is still more you need to do to make your home truly a sanctuary of faith. If so, please do it! If you are married, counsel with your wife as your equal partner in this crucial work. There are few pursuits more important than this. Between now and the time the Lord comes again, we all need our homes to be places of serenity and security.⁶

Attitudes and actions that invite the Spirit will increase the holiness of your home. Equally certain is the fact that *holiness will vanish* if there is anything in your behavior or environment that offends the Holy Spirit, for then “the heavens withdraw themselves.”⁷

Have you ever wondered why the Lord wants us to make our homes the center of gospel learning and gospel living? It is not just to prepare us for, and help us through, a pandemic. Present restrictions on gathering will eventually end. However, your commitment to make your home your *primary* sanctuary of faith should *never* end. As faith and holiness decrease in this fallen world, your need for holy places will increase. I urge you to continue to make your home a truly holy place “and *be not moved*”⁸ from that essential goal.

Lesson 2: We Need Each Other

God wants us to work together and help each other. That is why He sends us to earth in families and organizes us into wards and stakes. That is why He asks us to serve and minister to each other. That is why He asks us to live *in* the world but not be *of* the world.⁹ We can accomplish so much more together than we can alone.¹⁰ God’s plan of happiness would be frustrated if His children remained isolated one from another.

The recent pandemic has been unique in that it has affected everyone in the world at essentially the same time. While some have suffered more than others, we have all been challenged in some way. Because of this, our common trial has the potential to help unite God’s children as never before. So, I ask, has this shared trial drawn you closer to your neighbors—to your brothers and sisters across the street and around the world?

In this regard, the two great commandments can guide us: first, to love God and, second, to love our neighbor.¹¹ We show our love by serving.

If you know of anyone who is alone, reach out—even if you feel alone too! You do not need to have a reason or a message or business to transact. Just say hello and show your love. Technology can help you. Pandemic or not, each precious child of God needs to know that he or she is not alone!

Lesson 3: Your Priesthood Quorum Is Meant for More Than Just a Meeting

During the pandemic, Sunday quorum meetings were canceled for a time. Some quorums are now able to meet virtually. Nevertheless, the work that the Lord has given to priesthood quorums was never meant to be confined to a meeting. Meetings are only a small part of what a quorum is meant for and what it can do.

My brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood and elders quorums, expand your vision of why we have quorums. How does the Lord wish you would use your quorum to accomplish His work—now? Seek revelation from the Lord. Humble yourself! Ask! Listen! If you have been called to lead, counsel as a presidency and with quorum members. Whatever your priesthood office or calling, let God prevail in your commitment as a member of your quorum and in your service. Experience with joy the righteousness you will bring to pass as you are “anxiously engaged in a good cause.”¹² Quorums are in a unique position to accelerate the gathering of Israel on both sides of the veil.

Lesson 4: We Hear Jesus Christ Better When We Are Still

We live in a time prophesied long ago, when “all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men’s hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people.”¹³ That was true before the pandemic, and it will be true after. Commotion in the world will

continue to increase. In contrast, the voice of the Lord is not “a voice of a great tumultuous noise, but ... it [is] a still voice of perfect mildness, [like] a whisper, and it [pierces] even to the very soul.”¹⁴ In order to hear this still voice, you too must be still!¹⁵

For a time, the pandemic has canceled activities that would normally fill our lives. Soon we may be able to choose to fill that time again with the noise and commotion of the world. Or we can use our time to hear the voice of the Lord whispering His guidance, comfort, and peace. Quiet time is sacred time—time that will facilitate personal revelation and instill peace.

Discipline yourself to have time alone and with your loved ones. Open your heart to God in prayer. Take time to immerse yourself in the scriptures and worship in the temple.

My dear brethren, there are many things the Lord wants us to learn from our experiences during this pandemic. I have listed only four. I invite you to make your own list, consider it carefully, and share it with those you love.

The future is bright for God’s covenant-keeping people.¹⁶ The Lord will increasingly call upon His servants who worthily hold the priesthood to bless, comfort, and strengthen mankind and to help prepare the world and its people for His Second Coming. It behooves each of us to measure up to the sacred ordination we have received. We can do this! I so testify, with my expression of love for each of you, my beloved brethren, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.