

A Voice of Gladness!

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“Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; ... a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy.”¹

Brothers and sisters, it is almost impossible to hear these words from the Prophet Joseph Smith and not break out into a great big smile!

Joseph’s jubilant expression truly captures the full and majestic joy found in God our Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness, for He has assured us, “Men are, that they might have joy.”²

We all shouted for joy³ in our premortal life when we heard God’s plan of happiness, and we continue to shout for joy here as we live according to His plan. But what exactly was the context for this happy declaration from the Prophet? What spurred these deep and heartfelt emotions?

The Prophet Joseph had been teaching about baptism for the dead. This was indeed a glorious revelation that was received with great joy. When Church members first learned that they could be baptized for their deceased loved ones, they rejoiced. Wilford Woodruff said, “The moment I heard of it, my soul leaped [for] joy!”⁴

Baptism for our deceased loved ones wasn’t the only truth the Lord would reveal and restore. There were a host of other gifts, or endowments, that God had been eager to bestow upon His sons and daughters.

These other gifts included priesthood authority, covenants and ordinances, marriages that could last forever, the sealing of children to their parents within the family of God, and ultimately the blessing of returning home to the presence of God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. All these blessings were made possible through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Because God considered these to be among His highest and holiest blessings,⁵ He instructed that sacred buildings be erected where He could confer these precious gifts upon His children.⁶ These buildings would be His home on earth. These buildings would be temples where that which was sealed or bound on earth in His name, by His word, and with His authority would be bound in the heavens.⁷

As members of the Church today, some of us may find it easy to take these glorious eternal truths for granted. They have become second nature to us. Sometimes it is helpful when we see them through the eyes of those who learn about them for the very first time. This became evident to me through a recent experience.

Last year, just prior to the rededication of the Tokyo Japan Temple, many guests not of our faith toured that temple. One such tour included a thoughtful leader from another religion. We taught our guest about Heavenly Father's plan of happiness, Jesus Christ's redeeming role in that plan, and the doctrine that families can be united eternally through the sealing ordinance.

At the conclusion of the tour, I invited our friend to share his feelings. In reference to the uniting of families—past, present, and future—this good man asked in all sincerity, “Do the members of your faith truly understand just how profound this doctrine is?” He added, “This may well be one of the only teachings that can unite this world that is so divided.”

What a powerful observation. This man was not moved simply by the exquisite craftsmanship of the temple but rather by the stunning and profound doctrine that families are united and sealed to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ forever.⁸

We should not be surprised, then, when even someone not of our faith recognizes the majesty of what happens in the temple. What could become common or routine for us is sometimes seen in its splendor and majesty by those who hear it or feel it for the very first time.

Although temples had existed anciently, with the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the building of temples has been one of the highest priorities of all prophets since the Prophet Joseph Smith. And it is easy to understand why.

When the Prophet Joseph was teaching about baptism for the dead, he revealed another great truth. He taught: “Let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, ... they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect.”⁹

As we can see, the need for temples and the work that is done for both the living and the dead become very clear.

The adversary is on the alert. His power is threatened by the ordinances and covenants performed in temples, and he does anything he can to try to stop the work. Why? Because he knows of the power that comes from this sacred work. As each new temple is dedicated, the saving power of Jesus Christ expands throughout the world to counteract the efforts of the adversary and to redeem us as we come unto Him. As temples and covenant keepers grow in number, the adversary grows weaker.

In the early days of the Church, some would worry when a new temple would be announced, for they would say, “We never began to build a temple without the bells of hell starting to ring.” But Brigham Young courageously retorted, “I want to hear them ring again.”¹⁰

In this mortal life, we will never escape the war, but we can have power over the enemy. That power and strength come from Jesus Christ as we make and keep temple covenants.

President Russell M. Nelson has taught: “The time is coming when those who do not obey the Lord will be separated from those who do. Our safest insurance is to continue to be worthy of admission to His holy house.”¹¹

Here are some additional blessings God has promised us through His prophet:

Do you need miracles? Our prophet has said: “I promise you that the Lord will bring the miracles He knows you need as you make sacrifices to serve and worship in His temples.”¹²

Do you need the healing and strengthening power of the Savior Jesus Christ? President Nelson reassures us that “everything taught in the temple ... increases our understanding of Jesus Christ. ... As we keep our covenants, He endows us with *His* healing, strengthening power. And oh, how we will need His power in the days ahead.”¹³

On the first Palm Sunday, as Jesus Christ triumphantly entered Jerusalem, a multitude of His disciples “rejoice[d] and praise[d] God with a loud voice ... saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord.”¹⁴

How fitting that on Palm Sunday of 1836, the Kirtland Temple was being dedicated. On that occasion the disciples of Jesus Christ were rejoicing as well. In that dedicatory prayer, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared these words of praise:

“O Lord God Almighty, hear us ... and answer us from heaven, ... where thou sittest enthroned, with glory, honor, power, majesty, [and]

might. ...

“... Help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne, with acclamations of praise, singing Hosanna to God and the Lamb!

“And let these ... thy saints shout aloud for joy.”¹⁵

Brothers and sisters, today on this Palm Sunday, let us as disciples of Jesus Christ also praise our holy God and rejoice in His goodness to us. “What do we hear in the gospel which we have received?” Truly “a voice of gladness!”¹⁶

I witness that you will feel joy more and more as you enter the holy temples of the Lord. I witness that you will experience the joy He in turn has for you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Doctrine and Covenants 128:19.
2. 2 Nephi 2:25; see also Isaiah 55:12.
3. See Job 38:7.
4. Wilford Woodruff, “Remarks,” *Deseret News*, May 27, 1857, 91; punctuation modernized.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:39.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:45–46.
8. President Joseph F. Smith taught, “There has got to be a welding together and a joining together of parents and children and children and parents until the whole chain of God’s family shall be welded together into one chain, and they shall all become the family of God and His Christ” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [2011], 411).
9. Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
10. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 300.
11. Russell M. Nelson, “The Future of the Church: Preparing the World for the Savior’s Second Coming,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Apr. 2020, 9.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “Becoming Exemplary Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 114.

13. Russell M. Nelson, “The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 93–94.
14. Luke 19:37–38.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 109:77, 79–80.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 128:19.