

Come, Listen to a Prophet's Voice

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I'm tempted to tell you a story. My wife would say that I shouldn't, but oftentimes introductions include statements that are inaccurate. A speaker at a Rotary Club was introduced as a man from Oklahoma who had just made \$10,000 on a cattle deal. When he responded to the introduction, he said there were some inaccuracies: "It wasn't Oklahoma, it was Texas. It wasn't cattle, it was oil. It wasn't \$10,000, it was \$40,000. It wasn't me, it was my brother, and he didn't win it, he lost it!"

I'm honored to be here this night and to look out at this vast audience. My wife, Ruby, and I enjoyed the few months we spent at BYU and, of course, in this beautiful valley. As we were driving down this evening there was a haze hovering just below the peak of Timpanogos. I don't recall that we had ever seen it quite as beautiful as it appeared this evening. We could see the traditional image of the Indian maiden more clearly than ever before. We commented as we were driving along, "What a beautiful valley, what a great people, what a haven in which to live."

I stand at this pulpit, my dear friends, in deep humility. As the eventide settles over this peaceful valley, I reflect on my responsibilities and my desire to communicate to you some encouragement in your own personal lives.

And I bring to you not an argument or a doubt, but a heavensent conviction I have that this is the Church of Jesus Christ, restored to the earth in these latter days, that God lives, that he's real, that he has flesh and bones just as you have and as I have. Jesus *is* the Christ, the Son of the living God. The story told by the Prophet Joseph Smith when he came out of that little grove of trees we affectionately refer to as the "Sacred Grove" is true; he did see God the Father, and the Son, as he reported, and the Church is led by a prophet of God today.

Great Moments of Life

Some events happen in our lives that are so overwhelming, yet are linked so clearly to divine power and influence, that however we feel at the time they happen in our lives—and they do or will happen to you, as they have happened to me—we feel so inadequate and unprepared. We see the hand of the Lord in so many ways in this Church, not the least being the calling and spiritual development of ordinary people like you and me. Someone has

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likened each of our lives to a mighty river as it flows into the sea. It is the product of many streams—some large, some small—and even brooks, created by the melting snow high in the mountains. I thank God for the streams, clear and pure, that have influenced my life: for the goodly parents who taught me the goodness of life—honor and virtue—and who taught me to love the Lord; for the small towns where we made our own fun and adventure; for my widowed mother, who always taught correct principles; for the priesthood and the scouting program; for the chance to go away to college and for the blessing of finding a girl I knew should be my companion. I saw her first at a dance at the Old Mill in a canyon east of Salt Lake. I remember the dress she was wearing. I remember how much fun she was having with her date. I was sitting there with someone else. As I watched this girl dancing by, I asked my date, “Do you know her?”

She said, “Yes.”

I recall saying, “Why don’t you introduce me to her?” Now that isn’t the way you win friends and influence people!

I remember how hard I worked to get a date with her. I would phone her. She would have a date, and I would say, “What time is he coming?”

“Eight o’clock.”

“How about seeing me at six?” I was determined, because I had a deep impression that this was the girl I should marry. I wanted to marry the right person in the right place. I remind all of you who are here that the most important decision you will make in your life is who you marry and where you marry that person. Never forget it. Never deemphasize it.

I have moved my wife and our family all over America. She still is beautiful and understanding—sustaining me, provoking me when needed, but always by my side. We are blessed with a lovely daughter and two fine sons, choice and wonderful daughters-in-law and a

son-in-law, and with eighteen grandchildren. They’re all perfect, we think.

When I was younger than most of you, growing up in a little town in Idaho, I thought the great moment of my life would be that I would be a successful baseball player for the New York Yankees. We would be in the World Series; the games would be three and three. Now, the seventh game—the deciding game—the ninth inning, score tied. And guess who would get up to bat? The pitcher would put the ball in just where I would like it, and I would knock it out of Yankee Stadium. The ball would become lost in the parking lot. I would be the hero of the World Series. I thought that would be the great moment of my life. But I want you to know that that isn’t so. Not that the World Series happened; however, I found the moment.

A few years ago I sat in a little white room in the Los Angeles Temple—a little, plain, simple room with no fancy adornments on the wall. My wife was there by my side. One son and his wife were there along with our daughter and her new husband. Our other son was kneeling at the altar holding the hand of the young lady he was about to marry. As I looked around the room, I thought, “David, you had your priorities out of order. Some athletic event or being the hero of some worldly event isn’t the great moment of your life.” I knew the great moment of my life was there, then, because all I had that was really important—remember, really important—was in that room. Some bishops and stake presidents somewhere had found all of my family worthy to be in that room. It is not the number of cars you own, or the number of white-faced cattle you might have in the hills, or the size of your bank account, but the eternal values that count. You remember the Lord said something about moth and rust getting through to our worldly possessions (see Matthew 6:20). I knew that the greatest moment in my life was having all of our family in that room in the Los Angeles Temple.

Moments, reflection, blessings—these are the great moments of our lives.

A Witness of the Truth

A few days ago I had the opportunity of being in a radio broadcasting studio in Melbourne, Australia. We were there with President Kimball, as you know, holding area conferences. I was to be interviewed for thirty minutes. As it turned out, Mr. Norman Banks, the radio personality, kept me for an hour. As we conversed and answered phone calls on the air about the Church, I felt again the great blessings and truths of this gospel. I would say to you, “Never doubt that this is the Lord’s work. There are times or situations you are in when you know that the Lord blesses you.” I didn’t know we were going to have a “live” broadcast. I thought I would be interviewed “on tape” and have an opportunity to make corrections if necessary. Then I was informed we were going on the air live, that it was a talk show.

I know that, if we desire, the Lord will magnify us and bless us. I was impressed as this radio program got underway with the clarity of my mind and the calmness that came over me. We all felt the hand of the Lord. I had an opportunity to reply to questions that came in over the telephone: “What is a prophet?” “How is he appointed?” “Are you really an apostle?” “How were you selected?” “What special training or schooling have you had to be called a prophet?” “Why are all of you in Australia?” “Are you concerned what ministers say about your doctrine? You must know that they use some very strong language about you.” “Are you carrying on a dialogue with any other church, hoping to merge with them?” “What do you hope to accomplish in Australia?”

The lights kept flashing on the switchboard as the calls came in. Ninety percent of them were the most positive, wonderful expressions you could imagine. “I’ve just been baptized.

My whole life has changed. Thank you, thank you for bringing the Church to Australia,” a voice said. Another voice: “We’re now holding family home evening. Our family is now back together. Thank you for the Church and the prophet coming to Australia.” The radio commentator caught the enthusiasm and the spirit of most of these callers, and when a caller wanted to take issue with me, the commentator said, “You’ve made your point, and you need to develop some love in your heart!” He was on my side! As these episodes were unfolding, I would wonder at times, “Am I saying, am I doing, what I should be? I’m now a special witness of the Lord.”

A Call to Serve

I want you to know that I have grown up in the Church just as you have. I’ve gone through the steps and the challenges that you have and that you are going through. I understand your concerns, but I also have a concept of your opportunities.

Fifty-nine days ago today President Kimball phoned me at my office and requested me to meet him in the Salt Lake Temple. It was about two o’clock. I walked to the Temple wondering what I had done wrong. Did he plan to change my assignments or my responsibilities? Perhaps I wasn’t measuring up to my calling. As we met on the fourth floor in the Temple, he had his usual warm greeting, which was reassuring to me. President Tanner and President Romney and the eleven were meeting in another room. President Kimball invited me into an empty room there on the fourth floor where we were alone—alone in this beautiful room in the House of the Lord with the Lord’s prophet. After some inquiry about my life President Kimball took me by both of my hands and, looking deeply but kindly into my eyes (and, it seemed, right into my soul), he said he was calling me to fill the vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve. I was overcome. I could hardly say a word. Words are inadequate to

describe my feelings even as I stand here with you. There comes a swelling within that is indescribable. You think, “Me? Why is he calling me? How can I? There are so many that are more worthy. Such great men have been so honored.”

With the two of us all alone, communicating with our hearts and our souls, the Lord’s prophet calling me, I knew I was in the presence of the Lord’s anointed. Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote that there are times “too full for sound and foam” (“Crossing the Bar,” 1889). I understand what he was writing about. The prophet invited me to meet the other Brethren. As we walked across the hall and into the room where they were waiting, they were all so warm and friendly. It helped my feet get back on the floor. President Kimball said, “Do you want to call Ruby?” As I stood there in sort of a daze looking at the telephone, President Kimball jokingly said, “Do you remember your phone number?” I was having such a difficult time dialing, Elder Boyd Packer inquired, “Do you remember Ruby’s name?” And then my Brethren, with their great warmth and understanding, assured me that they had all had the same experience. As Ruby answered the phone, she detected some strangeness in my voice. I’m sure it was a little unsteady, weak, and shaky. She said, “Where are you?”

I said, “I’m in the Temple.”

She said, “What are you doing in the Temple?” Then I told her what had happened, and she began to cry.

All of you young men, and the rest of you, what would we do without loving, understanding companions? Be grateful for the Lord’s plan. We understand that Mother Eve is a joint heir with Father Adam to the blessings of exaltation. That blessing is for all of you who are so married in the House of the Lord and are valiant to the end.

President Kimball, joined by all the Brethren of the First Presidency and the Quorum, placed his hands on my head. He

ordained me to this calling with words I will always remember: “an apostle is entitled to the revelations of the Lord in very deed”; “we promise our lives, all of our efforts, our thoughts”; “keys, powers of the apostleship.” I was reminded, “You are the eighty-second so chosen in this dispensation.” I have been called to join the finest group of men on earth. There is no group of men like them anywhere.

The Lord’s Prophet, President Kimball

I had a feeling, as I wondered what to say to you here this night, that you might appreciate this personal treasure of mine. I thought I would share it with you as I testify of my knowledge that President Kimball, our prophet, is the mouthpiece of God on earth. The Lord says that he is to be like unto Moses—a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the Church (see D&C 107:91–92).

Your hearts would have been caused to burn as did ours as we watched him preside over nine separate area conferences during the last few days, each with three general sessions and separate priesthood and mothers-and-daughters meetings. I feel blessed to have seen and felt the love the Saints have for him and his love for the people all over the world—in Samoa, New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, and Tahiti; in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. The Saints expressed their love in their welcome for him, and then again throughout the meetings in their songs and testimonies. They had spent weeks and weeks in preparation. Streets, fences, and buildings were decorated with ferns, orchids, hibiscus, and coconut fronds. They had fasted and prayed that the rains would cease. The rain fell before and during the meeting. One day the rain fell exactly at ten o’clock. We were all inside and the meeting had started. We don’t think a drop ever fell on the prophet. They had fasted and prayed.

Several hundred students lined the road to our school in Tonga, standing at attention, immaculately uniformed. Boy scouts formed honor guards; several hundred of our teenagers hired buses to take them to the Melbourne airport to greet the prophet. They had paid a dollar each. The plane was going to be twenty minutes late, and they were fearful that the bus couldn't wait and they would have to go back to the city. But the plane arrived in a few moments, and tears flowed as they had a chance to see him and to touch his hand. One of our group saw an excited five-year-old boy and asked, "Did you shake his hand?"

This little boy said, "No, but I saw him. Boy, did I see him!" The little boy handed this member of our party a little envelope and said, "Will you give this to the prophet?" When it was opened, here was a little hand drawn picture of President Kimball. Scrawled at the bottom was "Love, from Luke."

Heads of state, government leaders, and government ministers were all gracious in receiving the prophet and his party. I'm sure that missionary activity as well as Church participation will surely increase sharply after this visit by the prophet. You could feel the spiritual impact of his being there and the reaction in the cities, the people, the press, and those who visited or interviewed him.

Probably the highlight of the entire trip was the conference session Sunday morning televised to all of Australia from the beautiful Sydney Opera House. The three Sydney stakes prepared the choir, and their own local speakers were just superb. We were so proud of what they did. You would have thought the Tabernacle Choir was there, they did such a marvelous work. Then, even though the President was tired, he was abundantly blessed as he spoke to this nationwide audience, explaining and testifying of the truthfulness of the gospel. The prophet was testifying and explaining that to be a prophet of the Lord one does not need to be everything to all men.

He does not need to be youthful and athletic, an industrialist, a financier, nor an agriculturist. He does not need to be a musician, a poet, an entertainer, nor a banker, a physician, nor a college president, a military general, nor a scientist. He does not need to be a linguist, to speak French, Japanese, German, and Spanish. But he must understand the divine language and be able to receive messages from heaven. He need not be an orator, for God can make his own. The Lord can present his divine message through weak men made strong. What the world needs is a prophet-leader who gives example, clean, full of faith, godlike in his attitude, with an untarnished name—a beloved husband, a true father.

We were so thrilled as he explained this to people who would say, "What is a prophet? Why do you have one? We don't have them, so why do you have them?" He told them that a prophet needs to be more than a priest or a minister or an elder. His voice becomes the voice of God to reveal new programs, new truths, new solutions. He made no claim of infallibility. He must be bold enough to speak truth, even against popular clamor for lessening restrictions. He must be certain of his divine appointment, of his celestial ordination, and of his authority to call to service, to ordain, to pass keys which fit eternal locks.

My dear friends, have no fear of Spencer W. Kimball not being in tune to receive God's instructions. The witness is mine that he is one of God's great prophets. I know not what may lie ahead, but of one thing I am certain: I am committed in every way to serve the Master, to testify of him, and to follow the direction of President Kimball as his spokesman.

Obedience to Revelation

The Lord wants and needs all of you to be strong, to be believers, to be an example of goodness to all the world. Mediocrity and weaklings come cheap. The world is full of them. As you plan your future and as you have

doubts about big decisions, read what the prophet says. We sing a song, but I don't think we sing it often enough—"Come, listen to a prophet's voice, and hear the word of God." Listen to what the prophet says. Read what he says. Read everything you can get your hands on that he says. He will never lead you astray, and you won't go astray if you follow that direction. Live so you can ask for the revelation that you are entitled to personally.

I was at a stake conference a few weeks ago in Augusta, Maine. I heard from a sixteen-year-old girl who had been called to be a class leader—sixteen years old. She said she made a list of seventeen names for counselors. She prayed for help. The next day she crossed off three of them. After praying and asking the Lord for more help, two days later she said there were only two names left on the list. This young lady had had her own experience and testimony of personal revelation that you are entitled to.

Listen to those who have gone down the road ahead of you. Don't be classed with those of whom we say, "In one ear and out the other." Don't do that. Listen to those that have had some experience and have been down that road. Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote, "Is it possible to transmit the experience of those who have suffered to those who have yet to suffer?" (*Reader's Digest*, December 1975, p. 69). Is it possible? Can one part of humanity learn from the bitter experience of another?

I leave my blessings with you, praying humbly for you to live the standards of the Church. I know you hear it often, but how are you doing with it? The scholarly Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Souls are not saved in bundles. The Spirit sayeth to the man, 'How is it with thee? thee personally?'" ("Conduct of life: Worship"). How *are* things with you personally, you—human, child of God, an important person, a member of the Church, family, children, future, vision of eternity? How are you doing? Come, listen to a prophet's voice, and hear the words of God.

Sister Haight and I were going through London a few weeks ago. From one of the London papers I cut out a little story in which the headmaster of one of the renowned prep schools in England (where Winston Churchill had gone to school as a boy) was telling a story about Churchill. Before he died they invited him, then in his old age but an experienced, great man with all of the background that he had had, to stand before the student body of this prep school. This was all that he had to say: "Never forsake the things that you know to be true. Never, never, never, never." May that blessing be yours. The gospel is true. This is the hope of the world. This gospel is the salvation of the human race, I testify to you in all humility, thanking you for this opportunity, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.