

“Your Work Is Not Yet Finished”

GLENN L. PACE

It's always a humbling experience to speak at a BYU devotional. I think this is especially true for those of us who attended this university. I remember when President David O. McKay came and spoke. At that time our devotionals were held in the George Albert Smith Fieldhouse. I was sitting close to the pulpit, and when President and Sister McKay came in, they walked right by me. I was awestruck. Now here I stand at the pulpit, thinking, “You deserve so much more.”

As I pondered what I should present, I settled on discussing an experience I've had during this last year that is unique and perhaps qualifies me to broaden your perspective at this key time in your life. It has certainly broadened mine. With your indulgence I will recount this personal experience.

One year ago I entered the hospital after having a heart attack that resulted in considerable damage. The operation seemed to go very well, considering I needed six bypasses. However, one hour after the operation, I had a second attack. My heart stopped beating for more than three minutes, and I went into shock for six hours. I was placed on life support. It was five days before my heart began to beat on its own, and I was on a respirator for over two weeks. The doctors were concerned that I might have suffered serious kidney and brain

damage (the jury is still out on the brain). I lost from one-third to one-half of my heart muscle, and things looked bleak. The doctors and some of the Brethren prepared my wife and our children for the worst. Technically I was gone, but then I got sent back. My cardiologist calls me Elder Lazarus. Etched indelibly in my soul to this day are the words “Your work is not yet finished.”

I don't know how much time I've got left. As a CPA with a master of accountancy degree from Brigham Young University, I have concluded that I must live 20 more years to get a decent return on my insurance company's investment.

There is a challenge and a blessing with not knowing how much time you've got left—or why you've been sent back. You become alert to everything around you, because one of the reasons you've been given more time may be right in front of you when you least expect it. King Benjamin's admonition has taken on a deeper and more personal meaning to me:

Glenn L. Pace was serving as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy when this devotional address was given on 11 January 2005.

I say unto you [Glenn] that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole [soul] yet ye would be [an] unprofitable [servant]. [Mosiah 2:21; emphasis added]

Please excuse that self-indulgence. You may be asking, “What does this have to do with me?” To each of you I say that your work is not yet finished either, and I regret to inform you that you don’t know how much time you’ve got left. Pondering that reality should raise some questions in your mind as to what you should be doing with that time. What is the Lord expecting of you during your sojourn on this planet?

It is therapeutic to step back from the details of life and reacquaint ourselves with the big picture. A few years ago our family was vacationing at Colter Bay in Grand Teton National Park. One beautiful, clear night we were walking down a trail that led to Jackson Lake. I happened to look up at the sky and was overwhelmed at the clarity of the stars and the magnitude of the universe. I wondered how long it had been since I had stared at the sky and let the grandeur of eternity and the glory of God’s creations wash over me. It had been too long, and therefore I repented and soaked it in. Later that year I was reading some excerpts from John A. Widtsoe’s *A Rational Theology*, which brought back some feelings of that night:

Earth, stars and the vastness of space; yesterday, today and tomorrow. . . . Only in general outline can the universe be understood. In its infinite variety of expression, it wholly transcends the human mind. . . .

Nevertheless, conscious man can not endure confusion. . . . Especially is he driven, by his inborn

*and unalterable nature, to know if possible his own place in the system of existing things. [John A. Widtsoe, *A Rational Theology: As Taught by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1937), 1]*

What is your place in the system of existing things?

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” simply and clearly states: “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny” (*Ensign*, November 1995, 102).

We were promised that the way would be prepared for us to reach our divine destiny and become like our heavenly parents. Every person who has ever lived or will ever live on this earth is a spirit child of heavenly parents. We have lived with them and have been taught by them. Their ultimate purpose has always been “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

While still in premortality we were taught the gospel and knew the difference between right and wrong. We also had the agency to choose our path. The account of the War in Heaven provides evidence that we had been taught the truth and had been given the agency to accept or reject what we had been taught.

Whenever numerous people with unique talents are given a set of rules or laws, along with the freedom to either obey or disobey and to work at their own speed, a diversity of progress in those individuals will result. When we are dealing with a population as numerous as the “sand of the sea,” we cannot imagine the variety of children our Father in Heaven is dealing with (Genesis 32:12; Jeremiah 33:22). The wonderful thing is that He loves us in our diversity. Our diversity helps Him to bring to pass His purposes here on the earth. With His complete understanding of each of us, He devised a plan for the time and place of our

lifework on earth. We learn in Acts 17:26: “[He] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”

With His omniscience He determined the precise time and place of our sojourn on earth that would give us the opportunity to continue to progress as well as to be of assistance to others in their progression.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained foreordination as follows:

To carry forward his own purposes among men and nations, the Lord foreordained chosen spirit children in pre-existence and assigned them to come to earth at particular times and places so that they might aid in furthering the divine will. These pre-existence appointments, made “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Pet. 1:2), simply designated certain individuals to perform missions which the Lord in his wisdom knew they had the talents and capacities to do. [MD, 290, s.v. “foreordination”; emphasis in original]

So here we are in the Marriott Center this morning knowing that we are not on earth at this time by accident or through the luck of the draw. Once we understand and have a conviction of this reality, we can obtain the faith to move forward and overcome any obstacle that stands in the way of fulfilling our foreordained destiny. We can and will make a difference.

Again, with your indulgence, let’s return to my circumstance. Knowing that the bounds of my habitation were set by a being who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, even Jesus Christ, I also know that I’ve got things I need to do and that perhaps I’m running out of time. This gives me a sense of urgency, which I’m trying to pass along to you.

You have been sent to earth at a very troublesome time. One can hardly watch the news without becoming depressed and cynical. It’s enough to drive you to watch *Lawrence*

Welk reruns. President Gordon B. Hinckley is one of the most positive people I know, but the world saddens and worries him. Last January, in the Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, he said:

No one need tell you that we are living in a very difficult season in the history of the world. Standards are dropping everywhere. Nothing seems to be sacred any more. . . .

*. . . I do not know that things were worse in the times of Sodom and Gomorrah. . . . We see similar conditions today. They prevail all across the world. I think our Father must weep as He looks down upon His wayward sons and daughters. [Gordon B. Hinckley, “Standing Strong and Immovable,” in *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting: The Priesthood and the Auxiliaries of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary*, 10 January 2004 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 20]*

Knowing these conditions exist, and understanding the doctrine of foreordination, you should be looking for opportunities to use your unique set of talents in making the world better and building the kingdom of God. You have not come to this earth in these troubled times by coincidence. You have not been sent to the earth during this wicked period of the earth’s history to fail because of it but to succeed in spite of it—and to help others do the same.

There’s an important message that you’ve heard from various leaders of the Church over and over again, but I’m not sure you have a conviction of it. It is that you belong to the finest generation we’ve ever had in the Church (see Gordon B. Hinckley, *CR*, April 1992, 96; or “A Chosen Generation,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 69; see also *CR*, April 1995, 93; or “This Is the Work of the Master,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 70). It is my observation that the young men and women of the Church today are much more spiritually advanced than those of my generation. This idea ties in to the plan we have been

discussing. You have been reserved to come to the earth at this time. There is no question about the seriousness of the condition of the world. Keep in mind, however, that you were foreordained to come to the earth at this precise season.

With this sobering thought you can't afford to let the distractions of life, let alone the decadence all around you, make you swerve off course. You can't become cynical about the state of the world rather than doing your part to improve it. This kingdom will never again be taken from the earth, and you are going to help build it.

At your age you are facing several critical forks in the road that will have a lifetime impact on your ability to fulfill your foreordained assignments. You may be trying to decide on a major or what career path you want to take when your education is complete. Many of you are in the process of finding a spouse who will walk at your side through this life and beyond. All of these are important steps in the direction of your foreordained mission here upon the earth.

You simply cannot afford to cut off the inspiration needed in making these decisions by veering off into forbidden areas, jamming the communication lines. Don't even flirt with sin. Most frequently this will end in disaster. All too often those who flee from temptation leave a forwarding address.

Where do you fit in the eternal scheme of things? I don't think you should be overly concerned about that. It is enough to know you do fit, and therefore you should be looking for ways you can fulfill your divine destiny.

First and foremost I would point out that the most important of all assignments is within your own families. President David O. McKay often taught, "No success in life can compensate for failure in the home" (see *CR*, April 1935, 116; quoting James Edward McCulloch, ed., *Home: The Savior of Civilization* [Washington, D.C.: Southern Co-operative

League, 1924], 42). And President Harold B. Lee taught, "The greatest of the Lord's work you brethren will ever do as fathers will be within the walls of your own home" (*CR*, April 1973, 130; or "Follow the Leadership of the Church," *Ensign*, July 1973, 98).

After saying this, I would emphasize that your choice of a career is very important and will equip you with the tools to provide a living for your family as well as present opportunities for building the kingdom. I have a strong testimony of this fact. I was first alerted to the possible synergism of a chosen occupation and the building of the kingdom of God when I was 19 years old. I received my patriarchal blessing, which stated that the Lord's purposes would be brought to pass through my chosen profession in the daily activities of my life. I was quite perplexed at first, because I was majoring in accounting and thought the most I could do for mankind in this profession was bore people to sleep. In hindsight, however, I can clearly see the Lord's hand in various career choices I have made. I can also see those choices have given me numerous opportunities to be of service. Choose your career carefully, with much study and prayer.

As far as Church callings are concerned, my counsel would be to not waste precious time wondering about any particular assignment that lies ahead. We should worry less about what we will be assigned to do in the future and more about how we are fulfilling the assignments we already have been given. We need to bloom where we are planted, because the Lord is the gardener.

Again referring to my situation, He who sent me back is perfectly capable of inspiring my leaders on where to use me. Your leaders will be inspired in a like manner as to where your unique set of talents can be used.

Whatever those callings are, you have great joy and fulfillment in store as you are magnified in your callings. Speaking from experience,

I can tell you the assignments I had prior to becoming a General Authority were just as fulfilling as those I have been given as a General Authority. There are many things I miss about my prior life in my own ward.

I will give one example. As an elders quorum presidency we had some success in preparing couples to go to the temple for the first time to receive their endowments and be sealed for time and all eternity. For the past 20 years I have been blessed with the authority to perform sealings for numerous couples. Although this is a great and sacred honor, I can say without reservation that the gratification I feel in doing so is not as great as that which I felt sitting in an obscure corner of the sealing room watching another sealer perform the ceremony for a couple with whom I had worked to prepare for that occasion. As General Authorities we travel from place to place and have limited opportunities to get personally involved with members.

Whatever formal callings come our way, I can testify that each of us will have the same accountability to the Lord for what we do with our callings as the prophet will with his. Furthermore, in performing our assignments we have access to the same Spirit he does and can receive the same joy therein.

President Gordon B. Hinckley has taught:

I wish to remind you that we are all in this together. It is not a matter of the General Authorities on one hand and the membership of the Church on the other. We are all working as one in a great cause. We are all members of the Church of Jesus Christ.

*Within your sphere of responsibility you have as serious an obligation as do I within my sphere of responsibility. Each of us should be determined to build the kingdom of God on the earth and to further the work of righteousness. [CR, October 2003, 85; or "An Ensign to the Nations, a Light to the World," *Ensign*, November 2003, 82]*

Over the last year an understanding of my unfinished business is gradually settling in. It extends far beyond being true to my current and future formal assignments. Obviously I need to be performing these with all my heart (what's left of it), might, mind, and strength. But the area in my life that needs the most improvement is outside the more visible, formal assignments—like speaking at a BYU devotional. I need to give more attention to what I am or what I am becoming. The Lord said, "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

I have been asking myself some hard questions. "Glenn, you've been a General Authority for 20 years. You've learned how to talk the talk. Have you become what you teach? When you are released as a Seventy and the mantle of your calling is gone, what will be left?" This is sobering when you've come as close to passing through the veil as I have. When I reflect on these questions, I sometimes wonder whether I was sent back or simply turned away. There is a difference.

I didn't come back any more pure than I was when I walked into the hospital, but I have come back humbled—to the dust—and hopefully this will give rise to future purification. I want to be as true to the Lord's expectations of me as He was to the Father's expectations of Him. Prior to coming to this earth, under the direction of God the Father, He created worlds without number. He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament.

With all this power and all this majesty, He nevertheless condescended to come to the earth in humble circumstances. Here "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). At the appointed hour He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He went about doing good and yet was despised for it. He entered the Garden of Gethsemane and took upon Himself our sins through the things He suffered. He was arrested, scourged,

and crucified. I've often wondered how He was able to discipline Himself not to use His infinite powers to escape the terrible pain inflicted on Him. I've long since realized it wasn't a matter of discipline at all but of love for each of us. He knew His foreordained assignment. He knew our salvation depended on His successful completion of it.

He was triumphant. The Savior was true to His assignment. Are we going to be true to ours?

It is my prayer that these remarks will be of some help to you in coming to understand where you fit in the eternal scheme of things. It is also my prayer that you will do those things while at this university that will make you equal to the task, because your work is not yet finished. It has only just begun. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.