

# *The Land Choice Above All*

HARTMAN RECTOR, JR.

Good evening. It's a great honor and privilege to greet you this evening—the beautiful Sabbath evening that is—in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We meet in his name; it's because of him that we're here.

We're on the eve of what we call the Fourth of July. It's altogether fitting that we consider, relative to the Fourth of July, the real meaning that is behind it. Certainly the Lord Jesus Christ is behind the Fourth of July and our celebration thereof. It's marvelous to have just the opportunity to get together on a Sunday evening like this with so many of you. You make such a beautiful picture. As I walked in here, I was struck by the pastel shades that were before me. You're like spirits, I'm sure, that radiate colors, feelings. I guess spirits do have colors. Certainly your spirits show through. It's what's inside that makes you look as you do on the outside. We're indebted to the living prophets for information such as this.

We're all spirits, each one of us. Each of us lives in a house of clay for a brief period of time, but it's our spirit that sees and feels and hears. It's the spirit, I presume, that also gets addicted to drugs and bad habits and evil desires, because each one of us is a spirit—just as God is a spirit. I refer you to the Doctrine and Covenants, where it says, "For man is spirit" (D&C 93:33).

## **The Meaning of Freedom**

We talk of a person having a good spirit or a bad spirit. We talk of the spirit of '76. We are going to celebrate our two hundredth national anniversary in the not-too-distant future, and this spirit of '76 is to permeate everything that we do. This evening I'd like to talk a bit about the spirit of '76 and what we are really doing when we celebrate the Fourth of July.

This holiday means a lot of things to a lot of different people, I'm sure, but most of all it means freedom—real freedom, the freedom to act, the freedom to pray, the freedom to love and *know* what we're doing. We do many things without really understanding what we're doing, but real freedom gives us knowledge and makes us free to move within our own spheres of activity. When the Lord makes us free, we're free, indeed, because we're not fettered by false ideas or understandings. We need to understand that we're here for a purpose, each one of us. We have missions to fulfill—real missions, missions that reach into eternity. We can make serious mistakes if we

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don't understand why we're here. We've been told we're here to fill missions that will make us as our Heavenly Father is. The mission, the purpose, the work and glory of our Heavenly Father are to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man—and woman. (*Man*, in this instance, is a collective term. It includes everyone.)

Resurrection comes as a free gift. No one has to do anything for that. Everybody's going to be resurrected whether he wants to be or whether he doesn't. There will be a lot of people resurrected that won't want to be. They're going to be resurrected anyway. You're going to get it whether you want it or whether you don't. All too often that happens to us in life: we get something whether we want it or not. Resurrection is a free gift which was given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, our elder brother.

But God equates his glory with eternal life, meaning the power to procreate after our own kind, eternally. That's the real purpose of being here. Eternal life is a gift of God, but it's not a gift in the sense that resurrection is a gift. No one will receive eternal life who doesn't want it. You have to want it more than anything else in this world because you have to have help from heavenly Father to receive it. The fact remains that the Lord cannot give it to you unless you're in condition to receive it. You can't get blessings from your Father unless you're in condition to receive them. Our whole purpose here is to get ourselves in condition to enjoy eternal life. That also comes only through the Lord Jesus Christ. And so freedom—real freedom—means freedom to get ourselves in condition to enjoy eternal life.

The Fourth of July, then, celebrates freedom of a sort. Everyone enjoys the Fourth of July. To children it means fireworks, Roman candles, sky rockets, explosions of all kinds. Back in my home state of Missouri, when I was growing up, there were no limits on the size of firecrackers. We took great delight in laying a stick of dynamite on top of a log, lighting it, and then going back quite a distance. We rattled all the

dishes on the shelves of every home in the valley in which I lived. We youngsters could hardly wait for the Fourth of July. I've always had a sneaking hunch that the Fourth means freedom to play with matches. I'm sure that has something to do with the reason children love it so.

To mothers, the Fourth means fixing picnic lunches and making sure that there's plenty to eat for everyone. They are the only ones who don't really enjoy much freedom on the Fourth of July.

### **The Symbolism of the Flag**

To everyone the Fourth means parades with marching bands, horses, floats, and beautiful girls such as are here this evening. It also means the flag, Old Glory, the star-spangled banner, the red, white, and blue. There is a poem that says:

*Hats off!*

*Along the street there comes*

*A blare of bugle, a ruffle of drums,*

*A flash of color beneath the sky:*

*Hats off!*

*The flag is passing by.*

[Henry H. Bennett, "The Flag Goes By," st. 1]

Red means courage and hardness. That's the reason, I presume, it was chosen. White means purity, virtue, innocence. Blue means vigilance, perseverance, justice. It's altogether fitting that our flag represent these virtues, and all those who live under this flag should manifest these virtues in everything that they do. With this symbolism you can appreciate why the Lord might like the stars and stripes—seven red, six white stripes, and then a blue field of stars, one star representing each state of the Union. It takes an act of Congress to add a state to the Union, of course. A star is always added on the Fourth of July following the acceptance of a new state. Today, of course, there are fifty of those stars.

The flag became known as the “star-spangled banner” because of the song written by Francis Scott Key in 1814. As you know, his song became the national anthem. The name “Old Glory” came from a ship captain by the name of William Driver. The first time that we heard that name was in 1824.

### **This Land Is Choice**

I thrill when I see the flag. I hope you do, too. It stands for the USA. This is a land choice above all other lands. We have revelation on the subject. There’s nothing like the USA anywhere. There never has been, and I presume there never will be. The Lord has made that comment in respect to this earth. There are those who feel that we in the Western Hemisphere are the New World but, of course, we aren’t the New World at all this is where it all began; thus the USA is really the “Old World.”

It was on this continent, near the center of this continent (in fact, very near Missouri, which is the center of this continent), that the Garden of Eden was located. Life didn’t start off over in what they call the “cradle of civilization” or today’s Holy Land. No, it started in the central part of the United States. That’s where Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden. They moved out to earn their bread by the sweat of their brows. Also it was there that Cain slew Abel. It was there that Noah built an ark, in the middle of a continent like the United States. No wonder they thought he was a little bit “strange,” to say the least. It was there that he and his wife and his three sons and their wives embarked on the ark and floated for many, many days. The ark finally came to rest on top of Mount Ararat. They came down out of the ark, and civilization supposedly started from there. But that was the second start. Civilization had already started here.

The Book of Mormon says that, when the waters receded off of this land, it became a land choice above all other lands—a land of

promise to those who would obey the God of this land, who is Jesus Christ. If the people would not obey the God of this land, then they would be swept off (see Ether 2:7–12). That has happened at least three times previously as far as we know. It happened in Noah’s time, certainly. It happened again to the Jaredite civilization. It happened again in the Nephite civilization, which included the Mulekites. It may have happened at other times. We’re not sure. We don’t have all the records that deal with this land, but what records we do have are consistent. The warning to us in this day and time is that unless *we* live these commandments, unless *we* serve the God of this land, we too can be swept from this land. I don’t believe that will happen again because this people, the Lord’s people, the Latter-day Saints, are going to keep the commandments of God. If they don’t, they will no longer be Latter-day Saints.

It’s important that we know where our salvation is. We know that if we want to remain free we have to remain firm—firm in living obedient to these commandments. This nation has been established primarily to preach the gospel. That’s really the only purpose in it. Nations such as this are not established just to enjoy prosperity and ease in living, though we have that; but if we let this be our object and design, the nation will not remain free. A call to be God’s nation is a call to service, a call to give of ourselves, to reach out as we have been doing since the day the USA really became a nation.

Early in our history there were those who were friendly to us because we were struggling. It seems that tyranny has always been more organized than freedom. Freedom is more precious than any of the gifts for which you may be tempted to give it up. Sometimes we’re tempted to give it up for ease or for personal convenience, but we dare not. Someone has said that anyone can sympathize with a friend’s suffering, but it requires a really fine nature to sympathize with a friend’s success. The USA

has been very successful, and some who were our friends while we were struggling are no longer such fast friends. They find things to criticize about us. I presume that we deserve it, but there's still no nation like this one, which has been set up to reach out to people and to lift people. That's what we've done.

### **Spreading the Gospel from the USA**

I'm proud of the USA because it has provided the means to establish and carry forth the gospel. It took a Constitution that was put together by men whom the Lord raised up for that very purpose. He says that he did:

*Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another.*

*And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood. [D&C 101:79–80]*

It seems always to be part of the Lord's economy that choice lands must be redeemed by the shedding of blood. This is a pattern the Lord has always followed.

So we have a nation established in this land, and it took a special Constitution to get it done. But that's not the end, certainly. I heard the testimony of a new mission president, Brother Salik, who is now presiding over the Brazil Rio de Janeiro Mission. He was born in Yugoslavia but moved into Austria at the end of World War II because of persecution. He said that the people almost starved to death but were saved by assistance under the Marshall Plan, in which food, clothing, and monetary assistance were provided by the United States after World War II to help those countries get on their feet. Brother Salik emigrated to Australia, and there two Mormon elders taught him the gospel and he joined the Church. He feels that he was saved by help from the United States.

The same thing has happened in many, many other instances, of course. It happened in Japan. Japan was placed under the occupation of American forces after World War II. It took the best blood of this nation to subdue that nation—that's for sure. But because the Japanese were placed under domination of the United States, they were made free—free for the first time in the history of that country. With that new freedom, everyone knows what has happened. Japan has become an economic power second perhaps only to the USA. And its economy is growing all the time.

You can see the difference between countries that were placed under Communist domination and those under American control. Certainly East Germany was one of the former countries. I've been there. There is no freedom. It is difficult for us even to keep the Church as a unit there—very difficult indeed. The Church cannot grow there, while in Japan it is growing by leaps and bounds. There are six missions in Japan today. The stakes are growing. It's the same way in Korea. We just divided that mission. There are two missions in Korea today and a stake in Seoul. And there will be other stakes in Korea.

In both Japan and Korea, when the troops moved out, the mission president and the missionaries moved in. Why? Because of Mormon servicemen. Wherever Old Glory flies, there the kingdom of God is established. It's that way all over the world. It makes no difference where she flies; you'll find the kingdom of God there. I'm convinced that the stars and stripes is God's flag because of what happens when it flies. It works the same way wherever you look. The same thing is happening in Vietnam, Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Southeast Asia, and Taiwan. Mormon servicemen have established the kingdom, so when the military goes out, the mission president and the missionaries go in. And the Lord's kingdom rolls forth.

Notice the same pattern: these lands have been redeemed by the shedding of blood—the best blood of this generation. Many choice young servants of the Lord have died in those conflicts. I presume it has ever been so. It doesn't seem to make any difference whether it be in the Church or outside; thus the kingdom of God rolls forth in the earth.

President Lee's statement on this subject is very interesting. Talking in terms of the fact that we are now a worldwide organization, he said that we're all over the world, which brings up special problems in the Church. We're beginning to see an expansion of the Church, he said. We're beginning to see it is no longer an American church. It is an international, universal kingdom of God that bids fair now to be on the way to blanket the earth with truths as the waters cover the mighty deep, as the prophets have said.

President Lee also spoke in terms of the finances that we are receiving throughout the world. There are only three countries in the world that can really support the Church monetarily today. There are only three countries in the world that in fact donate more to the kingdom of God in a year than the Church actually spends in those countries. Mostly it's not the other countries' fault that they contribute less. The people donate their share, but when the family income is twelve dollars a month, that's not very much. The Lord asks for only one-tenth of it, and they give it. These are good people, but they'd never be able to build the kind of chapels and the temples that need to be built around the world so that these people can enjoy the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we look at the figures, we see that the United States donates 112 percent of what is actually spent here in the United States. That extra 12 percent finances the rest of the world, almost, because 80 percent of the Church membership is in the United States. Canada donates 193 percent of what is spent in Canada. But only 2.2 percent of the Church

members live in Canada, so that 93 percent, while substantial, is not all that much, you see. South Africa donates 157 percent. But there are only two-tenths of one percent of the Church members in South Africa. Every other country donates much less: the British Isles, 29 percent; Germany, 38 percent; South America, 17 percent; Mexico and Central America, 13 percent; Australia and New Zealand, 28 percent; Japan, Taiwan, and the Far East, 29 percent. You see, the Saints here in the USA donate what it takes to run the kingdom around the world. Isn't it a privilege to do it? Aren't you glad you can?

Why do you suppose the Lord organized the kingdom in the United States? So he could finance it. The kingdom has to be financed. I'm sure the Lord knows where all the gold is. He could give me a shovel and tell me where to dig, and I could probably bring back enough gold from within sight of where I am standing in two days' digging to finance the Church for the next fifty years. But if he did that, he could forget about us. We, you and I, desperately need to make this kind of sacrifice because it's sacrifice that brings forth the blessings of heaven. They don't come forth on any other basis. Sacrifice is what is required—coupled with obedience. As a matter of fact, obedience is sometimes sacrifice, isn't it?

The same kind of statistics are evident when it comes to preaching the gospel or furnishing the manpower to carry the message of the Restoration around the world. Eighty-eight percent of all our missionaries in the world today come from the USA. Canada furnishes 7 percent of the missionaries in the world. That's above their share by quite a bit, isn't it? Only 2.2 percent of the Church members live in Canada, but they furnish 7 percent of the missionaries. The USA and Canada together provide 95 percent of those the Lord calls to preach the gospel. That means that the rest of the world furnishes 5 percent. That's the reason that President Kimball is so anxious that we

give the other countries in the world an opportunity to call their young men and women into the mission field. They desperately need to do so.

Calling missionaries from other countries wouldn't just take the load from the United States, because I don't anticipate any cutback in the missionary force from the USA. In fact, we need to increase the missionary force *here* because the Lord is going to open more doors for us and we're going to go places we've never been before. We're going to need this group that can come from the USA to go into lands that we would consider behind the Iron Curtain or the Bamboo Curtain. When the time comes to go, the Lord will open the curtains. There will be no curtains. We can penetrate them. We need to get ready to do that kind of work because it is vitally important that good people everywhere have an opportunity to hear the gospel. What happens to a young man when he has given the Lord his two years? Well, that's where we produce future mission presidents and stake presidents and bishops. That's what happens there. I've seen it happen among the peoples of those countries when their own young men have filled missions.

It's interesting also that 50 percent of all those missionaries who come from the United States come from the Utah-Idaho area. If the purpose of the Lord in establishing his kingdom here in the United States was to raise up a righteous generation in the rocky Mountains that would support the kingdom throughout the world, he has accomplished his purpose. But the end is not yet. It still goes on.

To me, it's obvious why the Lord established this country, this land. With his own hand he has done it. Isn't it great to be able to serve in the military of this country? As far as I'm concerned, service in the military of the USA is service in the kingdom of God. I believe that. I believe it even more strongly because of what the First Presidency has said. Their state-

ment is "We believe that young men should hold themselves in readiness to answer the call of their country to serve in the military." We can build the kingdom wherever we are. It doesn't make any difference what you're doing or where you are located. The work must be done. And we're free to do it because we have this kind of a nation as our heritage. We know more about freedom, I presume, than anyone knows—except, I guess, maybe one doesn't really know about freedom unless he's lost it. But we know about freedom because we *have* experienced it.

### **The USA Welcoming Immigrants**

Another reason why I love the USA is that she provides a haven for those who have no hope. It doesn't make any difference what nation they come from. The inscription on the Statue of Liberty says this very well. More properly, if we were looking up this inscription on the Statue of Liberty we would find that the name of the statue is the "Liberty, Enlightenment" or "Liberty Enlightening the World." That's really what the name of the Statue of Liberty is—"Liberty Enlightening the World." Isn't that descriptive? Part of the inscription on that statue says:

*Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp.  
Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*  
[Emma Lazarus]

The people have come from all nations. The mixing of the blood of all of the children of God has taken place here. Isn't it apropos? That's how you get strength. Anybody who knows anything about raising cattle knows that you have to bring in outside blood lines every now and then to build strength in the stock. Of course, it's the same way in the

kingdom of God. That's the reason we need to keep bringing in the converts, mixing them with the blood in the Church so the blood of Israel will be kept strong and viable.

### American Patriots

Another reason why I love the USA is that she has produced some great men—great men that you can hold up as an example, that you can look to for leadership. George Washington, whom many call the father of this country, was such a man. In his first inauguration he set a tone that everyone could profitably seek to emulate. After he had accepted the oath of office from Robert Livingston of New York, he added the words “so help me God,” and then he kissed the Bible and went back to work. There are no other coins that I know of any-place in the world that have “In God We Trust” stamped on them as a motto.

Another great patriot was Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence—just struck it off, as it were, at the age of thirty-three. A short quote: “We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” About this document Edmund Burke, the famous English statesman, is supposed to have said, “It was the most noble document ever struck by the pen of man.”

And then, of course, there was Abraham Lincoln, who could not abide that man should be in bondage one to another. Born in a log cabin, he followed the study course of the Bible, the scriptures, and you couldn't do better than that. He was probably one of the most quoted men of all times. They tell me his words fill fifteen volumes. The 2 ½-minute talk that he delivered at Gettysburg I presume will stand always and forever as a masterpiece:

*Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation,*

*conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*

*Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.*

*But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*

I guess that couldn't be improved upon, for he said it all. The Spirit bears record that what he said was true.

The greatest American who has ever lived in this dispensation was the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was raised up by the Lord. We have testimony by prophets that he has done more, save the Lord Jesus Christ, than any other man for the salvation of mankind. Yes, he was the instrument through which the Lord reestablished his kingdom upon the earth, made it available to everyone, as many as will. The Prophet Joseph Smith was a great, great champion. He said one time, “Never be discouraged. If I were sunk in the deepest pit in Nova Scotia and the Rocky Mountains were

piled on top of me, I'd hold on, exercise good courage and faith, and come out on top." I'm sure he would have. You couldn't beat him. Isn't it great to be that kind of a winner? I presume that's the way the Lord is. You can't beat him. He can make something good out of any bad kind of circumstances—no matter what the conditions are.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said at another time, "I never met a man I couldn't throw." Some thought that was a terrible thing for a prophet to say. But I love it, don't you? What a champion he was! He brought forth some of the greatest, most beautiful revelations that you could ever read. He told us how to exercise authority—the one thing that man has more trouble with than anything else. Authority is hard to exercise correctly. The Prophet started out using some of my favorite words. He said:

*How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course [I like that Missouri in there, you see] or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.*

*Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen?*

*Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—*

*That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.*

*That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is*

*withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.*

*Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God.*

*We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.*

*Hence many are called, but few are chosen.*

*No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood [or authority], only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;*

*By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—*

*Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;*

*That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death. [D&C 121:33–44]*

And then he gave the secret, if you would have communion with the Lord:

*Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.*

*The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever. [D&C 121:45–46]*

There will be no greater words written than those. The Prophet Joseph Smith had to go through a lot of trials and tribulations to bring



that to pass. He had to spend nine months in a jail—dungeon, if you would, back in Liberty, Missouri. I'm not proud of that. But if he had to do this only to bring forth those words, it was worth it.

Many times we feel that we're terribly put upon by the things we suffer. For instance, do you know what it took to get the Smith family from Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, over to Palmyra, New York? Three crop failures and impending drought. I presume the Smith family felt that they were terribly mistreated. Now, of course, the Lord could have sent the angel Moroni down to Joseph Smith, Sr., and said, "Brother Smith, I'd like you to move your family over to Palmyra, New York. There's something I'd like Joseph to do over there." He could have, but he didn't, you see. He just made it untenable for them to stay there. Aren't you glad he did?

Many times the things that we think are terribly disconcerting to us and that we don't really deserve are the things that make us great. I had a cancer on my lip when I was eighteen years old. The doctor said it was caused from continuous exposure to the sun. If I stayed in the sun, he couldn't guarantee it wouldn't return. I love to farm, but I didn't like it that much, and so I left the farm. I had to, just as did the Saints who came to the Salt Lake Valley. (President Tanner says the Saints came of their own free will, because they had to.) That's the reason I left the farm. I left of my own free will because I had to. A short time later I was back in the navy living out in San Diego, California, and along came two young missionaries who knocked on the door. I don't think they ever would have found me back in Missouri. Not where I was, back there on the farm, anyway. If I hadn't had that cancer, I probably would not be here today. I'm glad I had it. The quality of refusing to be defeated will make winners of us all.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said something about patriotism that we ought to be aware of.

He said, "Patriotism should be sought for and will be found in right living." Isn't that interesting? You can't be really patriotic unless you're righteous. No man can be a good Latter-day Saint and not be true to the best interests and welfare of his country. We know what we're supposed to do. King Benjamin's doctrine is still true: "When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

The USA is great because its leaders are willing to give it away. I don't know what Kissinger has bartered away over in the Near East, but I'm sure he's given quite a bit away because those people he was dealing with wouldn't do the things that *he'd* want them to do unless he paid them for it. I don't think anyone representing any other nation could have persuaded them to do it, though. The price may be a little high, but we can afford it. We can afford peace as long as it doesn't destroy liberty and take away our honor.

We need to give. That's the message of the Fourth of July, as far as I'm concerned. It is, once again, a looking back to that time when our forefathers were willing to pledge their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to bring this nation to pass. Many gave their lives to do it, but it was worth it. When you die in this kind of a cause, I think you've got a ticket to the highest degree. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

We're called of the Lord to give, worldwide. But we should do it in the Lord's way. We have to keep the free-enterprise system because that's what makes it possible for us to do what we're doing. We can't do it with socialism and communism. They have over half of the people in Russia on the farm trying to feed the other half. Here in the USA, less than 10 percent of the people are feeding everybody else, yet we hear that there are still too many farmers. The cattle ranchers are going to cut back on the cattle production because prices are so bad. Isn't

that interesting? I believe we in the United States could feed the whole world if we really wanted to. We can do it because this is that land choice above all other lands. We can reach out to other peoples, and they can feel the touch of the Master's hand through us because that's what we're called to do.

### The Influence of the Master

We are blessed above all other people. But we're not blessed to sit down with our blessing and hold it and hug it to our breasts; we are blessed to give it away, for in the giving we always get back more than we give. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ and that's the philosophy of this country. We've got to follow that because there are many who can feel the touch of the Master's hand through us. There's a verse that illustrates this point:

*'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer  
Thought it scarcely worth his while  
To waste much time on the old violin,  
But he held it up with a smile:  
"What am I bidden, good folks?" he cried,  
"Who'll start the bidding for me?  
A dollar, a dollar," then, "Two." "Only two?  
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?  
Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;  
Going for three—" But no.  
From the room, far back, a gray-haired man  
Came forward and picked up the bow;  
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,  
And tightening the loose strings,  
He played a melody pure and sweet  
As sweet as a caroling angel sings.*

*The music ceased, and the auctioneer,  
In a voice that was quiet and low,  
Said, "What am I bid for the old violin?"  
And he held it up with the bow.  
"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?  
Two thousand! And who'll make it three?  
Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice,  
And going and gone!" said he.*

*The people cheered, but some of them cried,  
"We do not quite understand  
What changed its worth." Swift came the reply:  
"The touch of a master's hand."*

*And many a man with life out of tune,  
And battered and scarred with sin,  
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,  
Much like the old violin.  
A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine;  
A game—and he travels on.  
He's "going" once, and he's "going" twice,  
He's "going" and almost "gone."  
But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd  
Never can quite understand  
The worth of a soul or the change that's wrought  
By the touch of the Master's hand.  
[Myra Brooks Welch, "The Touch of the  
Master's Hand"]*

The whole world can feel that touch through what goes out from this land, choice above all others. May we accept this challenge and may we love it. It's not enough just to be good, you know. You have to go the second mile. It's not enough just to pay your tithing; you've got to feel good about it. It's not enough just to be good; you've got to be good for something. We need to be good, but we need to be good for something. We need to be good for everybody that we touch.

Wherever the old stars and stripes flies or Old Glory waves, there the kingdom of God must be. That's what we're called to do, and you here who are young and vigorous don't know your own capacity. You're like the Lamanite striplings—I'm sure of that. There's nothing you can't do, as long as you include the Lord with it. He blesses this nation and he blesses those that go out to represent it, but we've got to be in condition so that the Spirit can speak through us.

It comes right back to what the Prophet said: "You cannot be patriotic unless you live righteously." Nor can you have eternal life

unless you live righteously. You can't represent the Lord unless you live righteously. Righteous living makes it all possible. I'm convinced that this Church is going to be that leaven that leavens the whole loaf. We're going to be here when the master comes—a people prepared to meet him. We'll have to do it. It won't just happen because we're born here. We have great responsibility, but responsibility that's a lot of fun. Enjoy it.

I bear you my witness that I know that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and that he hears and answers prayers. He is interested in the United States of America; make no mistake about that. He has gone to every length to establish this land. He kept it hidden for centuries so that no one else knew about it. All those who come to this land are led by the Spirit of the Lord. That's what it says in the Book of Mormon. What does that say about your forebears? They were led by the Spirit of the Lord to come here.

I bear testimony that Jesus is the Christ and that he is the God of this land and that we have

to worship the God of this land if we are to remain free and vigorous and viable. There is no other way. I bear witness that this is his true church. It's been reestablished upon the earth in our day and time through that great prophet, Joseph Smith—wonderful man that he was. But wonderful as he was, he's not the greatest prophet to you and me today. That man is Spencer W. Kimball, who is a prophet of the living God. I bear my witness that he is and that he makes the decisions in the Church and kingdom of God today that affect everybody throughout this world. It's a world organization. He makes those decisions under the direction of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, with whom he communicates, whose church it really is, and whose country this is, too. May we always be worthy and make the sacrifices necessary to be worthy. I pray that we will and leave my love and my blessing to you upon whom so much depends. You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, who are born to serve. May you do it I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.