

Go Forth to Serve

HARTMAN RECTOR, JR.

Good morning, my young brothers and sisters. It's a great honor and a privilege to greet you here this morning in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's because of him that we are here. Everything we do in this life that is really worthwhile comes through the Lord. This is the Lord's university. It's altogether fitting, I presume, that we should have seven or eight thousand, or however many may be here this morning, gather together at least once a week in a devotional, where we bear witness of what we know to be true: that Jesus is the Christ, that this is his university and that you are students in the Lord's university. Of course, great responsibility comes with being a student here. I'm sure this is an altogether unique experience; I don't think it exists anywhere else on earth. And so you are very, very special—special to the Lord. I hope you're special to yourselves as well because you have such a great, great responsibility—such a great work to perform.

Follow Christ

What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ? I presume it means to do the things that he would do. If you follow someone, then you do as closely as you can the things that he does. He said that he came to do the will of

his Father, and he could do only what he had seen his Father do before him (see John 6:38). He was a precise follower of his Father, and because he was, he became a great, great leader—a leader of us all. It is a fact that before you can be a great leader, you must be a great follower. If we could learn to follow the Lord, we would learn to serve our fellowmen. I presume that this is probably the most fitting motto that could have been composed to represent the purpose of Brigham Young University: "Enter to learn. Go forth to serve." It is important that you learn before you try to serve.

The Prophet Joseph Smith's brother had a great desire to preach the gospel. He wanted to go out and teach, but the Lord spoke to him, saying, "Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men" (D&C 11:21). And that's the order of things with respect to

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the Lord: we have a basic responsibility to get it ourselves first, then give it to our families, and then take it to the world. This is the order that we must follow. And only if we follow this order will we be effective and successful in the great mission that we have in the world today.

Jesus Christ came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. He said, "I am among you as he that serveth." He came to give, not to take. This sets the pattern for our own conduct if we are to fill the measure of our creation and magnify our probation. This is the standard that has been erected if we would follow the Lord—service in the kingdom.

Serve in the Mission Field

I presume one of the greatest ways that we can render service is to serve as missionaries, bringing the light of the gospel into the lives of people who sit in darkness. The living prophet of God has made this so plain that we can't misunderstand it. "The question is frequently asked," said the prophet Spencer W. Kimball, "should every young man fill a mission? And the answer has been given by the Lord. It is 'Yes, every young man should fill a mission.'" He said that every young man should pay his tithing. Every young man should observe the Sabbath. Every young man should attend his meetings. Every young man should consecrate his marriage in the temple, properly train his children, and do many other mighty works. Of course he should. He does not always do it, but he should. "We realize," said the prophet, "that while all men definitely should, all men are not prepared to teach the gospel abroad." Far too many young men arrive at the missionary age quite unprepared to go on a mission, and, of course, they should not be sent. But they should all be prepared. Then, if they are prepared, they can go. We have to be in condition if we're going to serve the Lord. Condition comes through obedience; it doesn't come any other way. The prophet continued, "There are a few physically unfit to do missionary service.

Paul also had a thorn in his side." That doesn't mean that you can't do it even if you have some physical impairment. There are far too many unfit emotionally, mentally, and morally because they have not kept their lives clean and in harmony with the spirit of missionary work. They should have been prepared—should! But since they have broken the laws, they may have to be deprived thereof, and there hangs one of the greatest challenges—to keep these young men worthy. Yes, we say, "every able, worthy man should shoulder the cross. They should be prepared, usually with saved funds for their missions and always with a happy heart for service" (Regional Representatives seminar, April 1974).

The Lord would be hard pressed to make that more plain, wouldn't he? I doubt if we could make that more plain to the understanding than that every young man should prepare to fulfill a mission. Of course, there's a great responsibility on branch presidents and bishops, too. In the recent conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil, President Kimball was speaking to the priesthood brethren and said, "A bishop that would let a young man arrive at missionary age, not having interviewed him and prepared him to go on a mission, is asleep at the switch, and he ought to take a switch and switch himself." That's pretty plain, too, isn't it?

Of course, missionary work prepares us for that which is to come, too. It's in the mission field that the Lord produces future bishops, stake presidents, mission presidents, Regional Representatives, and General Authorities of the Church. So this is one of the greatest opportunities for service that we'll know here upon this earth. Missionary work is a priesthood responsibility, and not primarily the young ladies' responsibility. They have a different responsibility, but many of them can serve. They have a responsibility to get married and raise a family, so we encourage them in this. Of course, if they arrive at the age of twenty-one and don't have a better offer, we might

entertain an offer for them to serve, too. Of course, some young ladies plan from their early youth to fill missions and have prepared to receive such a call to service. These make great missionaries and superior wives and mothers because of their missionary experience, but missionary work is still basically a priesthood responsibility.

The Lord authorizes his servants to speak for him, and he credits them and their account as though all of the service were rendered to him personally. He says, recorded in Matthew:

Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? [Matthew 25:34–39]

We never did that. You must have someone else in mind. “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). On the other hand, those who failed to do so unto their brothers are charged with not having done it unto the Lord, and they are judged on that basis.

The more acquainted we become with this Church, the more we understand that it is the Church of Jesus Christ because it is established primarily to bless the children of our Heavenly Father. The real purpose of this Church is to give us opportunities to grow and develop and

to serve our fellowmen, for that’s really the only way we can serve the Lord, anyway.

The Lord Jesus Christ runs this Church. It is the responsibility of the bishop and the stake president to live so closely to the Lord that they know whom the Lord has selected to fill certain positions of responsibility in the Church. They merely seek out these persons and issue the call in the name of the Lord. That’s how calls come in the kingdom. Since we understand that, there are a few things we need to keep in mind about service in the kingdom—service to our fellowmen. King Benjamin’s doctrine is still true that “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

Don’t Seek Church Callings

The first important criterion of service is, since the Lord makes the calls, you don’t seek for a call in the kingdom of God. A man would be a little suspect with me if he wanted to be a bishop. I can’t imagine why anyone would want that job, can you? One of the Brethren, speaking on that subject some time ago, made an interesting statement. He said, “Every time I see a bishop, I feel tired.” Now, that’s not a disparaging remark about a bishop, you understand. That remark just recognizes the great responsibility that a bishop has in this Church. He is the Lord’s executive representative to the families of the Church.

The family is the basic unit of exaltation. There’s nothing more important than a family to our Heavenly Father. He is a real family man. If you doubt that, just look around you. We all belong to him; we’re his children. He believes in families, and so he has designed the greatest blessings that families can receive to be received through the family relationships in his family house. (We call that the temple of the Lord.) Really, it’s the Lord’s family house. The most important room in the temple is the sealing room. That’s really just a family room. The only purpose of the sealing room is to create

eternal families. The most important object in the temple is the altar of the temple, but that's just a family altar. The only purpose of an altar in the temple is to join a man and a woman, making them one—one family in the Lord.

The bishop has the responsibility of watching over the families of the Church. Sometimes he has to call them to repentance because he is the father of the flock. He's also a judge in Israel. Now, you wouldn't want someone that would actively politic for that kind of a job, would you? No. However, it doesn't hurt to be in condition to accept a call when it comes, but you don't seek for a call. You don't actively go out and pursue a job in this Church.

Accept Church Callings When Given

The second criterion of service is, since the Lord does make the call, you don't turn down a call when it comes. You're not turning down the bishop or the stake president; you're turning down the Lord. You can't afford that. No one can. So accept those calls as they come to you, knowing that you're called to succeed and not to fail. The kingdom is not going to fail. It has been established upon the earth for the last time. Like the stone the prophet Daniel saw that was cut out of the mountain without hands, it is not a man-made organization but was done by the Lord through a prophet. The stone rolled forth down the mountainside, gaining momentum as it went. It broke down all the other kingdoms, filled the whole earth, became a great mountain, and stood forever (see Daniel 2:45). The kingdom is a winner. Isn't it great to be part of a winner? Don't you love a winner? I do. I believe we came to win. Some say, "It matters not whether you win or lose but how you play the game." *Don't you believe it.* It makes a lot of difference whether you win or not. That may be all right for basketball, but it's not all right for the kingdom of God. You see, we came here to win. We didn't come to just play the game. If we stick with the Lord we will win. We're not going to fail. The

Lord is not going to fail. The kingdom will succeed. It will win in the earth, but we have to be part of it if we're going to win with it. So we're called to be a winner in the kingdom of God.

Now, don't second-guess the Lord's anointed servants. Sometimes we get the idea that the bishop just doesn't recognize our ability or he wouldn't call us to such menial tasks. I had missionaries who wondered sometimes about my transfers. I might move them from Jacksonville, Florida, where there were 750,000 people (which they figured was commensurate with their ability) to the small town of Bristol, Florida, where there were less than 5,000. I got a letter from a missionary who got such a transfer one day. He said, "President, is this inspiration or desperation?"

I learned a verse that I think depicts the attitude that we must cultivate if we're going to accomplish the work the Lord has given us to do, for it's a mountainous task:

*"Where shall I serve today?" I said,
And my love flowed warm and free.
Then he pointed me out a little spot and said,
"There, tend that for me."*

*I said, "Oh no, not that,
Why, no one would ever see—
No matter how well my work was done—
Not that little spot for me."*

*And the words he spoke, they were not stern,
He answered me tenderly,
"Little one, search that heart of thine,
Art thou serving them or me?
Nazareth was just a little spot
And so was Galilee."*

You see, there are no small, small spots in the kingdom of God. There are no small jobs in the kingdom. To be called as a home teacher and be made responsible for the spiritual and physical well-being of a family, the basic unit of

exaltation—could that be called a small job? I tell you, it isn't. And as you're called to serve the Lord, you're called to touch the lives of these people. As a matter of fact, they can feel the "touch of the Master's hand" through you because the Lord calls you to act for him. He gives you authority to act for him, and he stands behind what you do when you act under the influence of his Spirit just as though he had done it himself. There's a verse that illustrates this:

*'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste such time on the old violin,
But 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,
With 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 "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"]*

People can feel that touch through you because that's what you're called to do—to touch the lives of people. The Lord says he'll stand behind his servants. In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants he says, "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38). It is exactly the same. You can speak for the Lord and the Lord will stand behind you because it is his work. It doesn't belong to you, and it doesn't belong to me. This is the work of the Lord. Aren't we privileged to have a part in it? When you put your heart into it, the Lord accepts of your offering. So we don't turn down calls when they come, but we put our hearts into them knowing that we're called to succeed.

Endure Difficulties of Service

The third criterion of service in the kingdom, and I guess probably the most important, is that you don't quit when the going gets rough. You may rest assured that the going will get rough. It always does.

*Stick to the task 'till it sticks to you,
Beginners are many but enders are few.
Honor, power, place and praise
Will come in time to the one who stays.*

*Stick to the task 'till it sticks to you,
Bend at it, sweat at it, and smile at it too.
For out of the bend, the sweat, and the smile,
Will come life's victory after awhile.*

After a while, or always, victory comes when you stick to the task till it sticks to you.

Don't worry about criticism. If you're going to serve the Lord, you can expect to be criticized. You might as well expect it, because you'll get it anyway. But you can take heart when people criticize you. Just remember that nobody ever kicks a dead dog. Generally, you've got to be up and moving in order to be criticized, but anyway criticism can't hurt you. I like the quote on criticism that Brother George Romney used. (He was somewhat acquainted with criticism and still is.) I think he was quoting Teddy Roosevelt when he said:

It's not the critic that counts—not the man who points out where the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena—whose face is marred with dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs, and comes short again and again, who knows the greatest enthusiasms and the greatest devotions and thus spends himself in a worthy cause. And who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of his accomplishment and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his place can never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Criticism cannot hurt you. Go on with the work the Lord has given you to do. As Paul says, "If the Lord be with us, who can be against us?" or what difference does it make who is against us? So, we need to bring to pass the work of the Lord regardless of whether it's popular or not. Now, we're very popular today. There's a brand new article in *National Geographic* that makes us look great. There's a new article in *Reader's Digest*. We look tremen-

dous. It hasn't always been that way, and it won't always stay that way. So don't get too used to having everybody talk nicely about you. You stick with the Lord and everything will turn out right irrespective of what is said.

It's also important, with respect to serving the Lord, that you recognize the fact that once you are called there will be a day when you are released. You accept your release the same way you accepted your call. President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., speaking on this subject one time at a general conference, gave us the hallmark of the correct philosophy for service in the kingdom when he said, "In the work of the Lord it's not where you serve but how you serve. In the church and kingdom of God, one takes the position to which one is duly called, which position one neither seeks nor declines," and the release comes the same way.

Love Your Fellowman

You are called to serve—to build the kingdom of God on earth. But you'll have to do that through people, so you're going to have to be involved with people. You can't do it by acting like a hermit sitting in a cave someplace. You have to be out where the people are and you have to love these people, because if you don't love them they won't listen to you. But if you do love them, they will listen and let you serve them. You can't turn down love. You have to be awfully good if you're going to love people who not only don't love you, but don't even like you. But that's what is required of us. That's plainly stated in Mosiah, which tells you how to become so good that you can love people whether you think they deserve it or not, and Mormon says that it's very simple. Speaking of King Benjamin, he says that he was a great teacher, and he was a just man who had established peace in the land of Zarahemla and who had taught the people to keep the commandments of God. Why? "That they might rejoice and be filled with love toward God and all men" (see Mosiah 2:1–4).

Keep the Commandments

So the secret of loving your fellowman is just keeping the commandments of God. Keep them precisely and, as you do, you will be filled with a love for your Heavenly Father and for your fellowman. You are really not qualified to serve unless you keep the commandments of God. I pray that you will keep the commandments and that you will seek opportunities to do more than is expected of you. The blessings are still in the second mile. It is vitally important that we go the second mile and love the people whom we're called to serve. With service in the kingdom, since it is the Lord's work, you don't have to worry about payment because the person—

*Who does God's work will get God's pay,
No matter how long may seem the day,
No matter how weary be the way,
He does not pay as others pay
With silk and gold and raiments gay,
But his high wisdom knows a way
And this is sure, that come what may,
Who does God's work will get God's pay.
[Author unknown, "God's Pay"]*

I bear you my witness, my young brothers and sisters, that that's the best pay you can get in this world. I leave you my testimony that I know that God, our Heavenly Father, lives. I am a witness before God that he does live and that he hears and answers prayers because he has heard and answered mine. I bear witness to you that Jesus is the Christ and that he lives. I know he lives. He has reestablished this, his true church, upon the earth in our own day and time through the great Prophet Joseph Smith. We have a living prophet of God on earth today. President Spencer W. Kimball is the Lord's living prophet, and he makes the decisions here upon earth in the Church and kingdom of God under the direction of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose Church this really is. I bear witness that you are a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people" (see 1 Peter 2:9) who are going to go forth and carry out the motto of Brigham Young University, which is the Lord's university on earth: "Go forth to serve." May you put your hearts into it. I pray that you will and that you'll love it, in Jesus' name. Amen.