

The Gospel

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Good evening, my young brothers and sisters—and some not so young. I consider it a privilege and an honor to greet you here this night in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I could not have thought of a more fitting song to be sung than “I Heard Him Come.” If he had not come, there would be no light from the sun or the moon or the stars. I presume there would have been no creation. There would be no life. We would not exist. It is because of him that we are here. I presume that everything we do in this life that is really worthwhile comes from the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are Christian and would like the whole world to know that. Sometimes we are accused of not being Christian. Elder Marion D. Hanks once said in General Conference, “If you were accused of being Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” Accused of being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, could you with good conscience feel you were guilty of that high commendation?

The Gospel Embraces All Truth

Christ came to serve. He asked a question one time, “Who is greatest? He that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth he that sitteth at meat?” (see Luke 22:27). In the world, we know who is the greatest. It is the one who pays the

bill, right? But not so in the kingdom. He followed that with, “I am among you as he that serveth.” He came not to be administered unto, but to minister and give his life as a ransom for many. We know that he did come to give his life as a ransom for all. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

And so we who follow the Lord, who follow the Master, should be walking examples of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I’ve heard the gospel variously described as containing all truth. All truth whatsoever is contained in the gospel. Do you think that is true? Surely it embraces all truth, but does it really contain all truth?

Well, let us see. There is a law, which I presume was irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundation of this world, that if you drop an object, it falls down. It never falls up; it falls down. You have never stubbed your toe and fallen up. You always fall down. That law says that any falling body is being pulled toward

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the center of the earth at the rate of thirty-two feet per second per second. And it is true. You can prove it in a vacuum. A feather and a steel ball fall at exactly the same speed.

Now, if that be true, how do we get into orbit? Well, if you are going to get into orbit, you have to get high enough above the earth so that you don't hit any mountains. So the recommended height is at least 31,000 feet, but if you really want to get up into orbit, you ought to get up where the satellites are. The satellites, I understand, are about 22,300 miles up. That is high. After you get up there, you have to accelerate to about 15,000 miles per hour. You are still propelled back to the center of the earth, but you are going so fast that you fall over the side of the earth. And so you fall around the earth. Thus, you orbit. When you are in orbit, you freely fall. There is no force of gravity; you don't feel anything.

You know how our Japanese friends are—they are so polite. When you meet them they always bow a little bit. One of the astronauts who was orbiting some time ago wanted to greet us. Instead of bowing, he raised up his feet. He sat right there in the air. He didn't move. Then he put his feet back down. That is different, isn't it?

How do you get from orbiting the earth to the moon? Well, you have to speed up again to about 25,000 miles per hour. Then you fall over the side of the earth, but you fall *way over* the side of the earth. In fact, you fall so far over the side of the earth that you fall out to the moon. Then you slow down to where you are falling over the side of the moon. Then you are orbiting the moon.

Now, what do you suppose that has to do with the gospel of Jesus Christ? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. I presume if you were a creator and you were going to organize a world, you had better use the law of gravity, or you may have chaos. So the gospel embraces all truth, but it doesn't contain all truth. If we wanted to know what the gospel of Jesus

Christ really contains, we probably could not do better than to have the Master tell us himself. So I would call your attention to 3 Nephi 27:13. This is the Master himself speaking, so I presume we can believe him.

Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. [3 Nephi 27:13]

He did not come to do his own thing. Many of us are here and we want to do our own thing. He came to do the will of the Father, and you and I are here to do precisely the same thing. We are here to do the will of the Father. Now, it is not exactly the same acts the Master came to do, but it is just as vital and just as important that we do the will of the Father also.

He continues:

And my father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. [3 Nephi 27:14]

Learn a Great Lesson

Christ said he came to be lifted up upon the cross. Do you suppose he wanted to be lifted up upon the cross? I cannot believe that he did, or if he did, he was acting very strangely in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before it happened. "If it be possible," he said, "let this cup pass from me." That is equivalent to saying, "I don't want to do this." "Nevertheless [said he], not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). He did want to do the will of the Father, although I don't think he was looking forward to this particular act. From that we learn a great lesson. I guess it doesn't make any difference whether you want to or not, as long as you do it.

I learned this lesson from my father. My father was smarter than I was when I was seven years old. Of course, I was smarter than he was when I was seventeen. And then he was smarter than I was when I was twenty-one. We went back and forth for years, my dad and I.

One time my father said to me, "You are not big enough to milk the cows." And I knew that I was. I was seven years old; of course I was big enough to milk. So I proved to my dad that I could milk. If you are going to milk, you have to get up early in the morning, like four o'clock. Now, that is early. You have to get your bucket, go out and clean and feed the cows, then you have to sit under them, and you have to pull and tug and squeeze. I did that until I could get the milk. I can make the foam stand up three inches in the bucket. I still have a milkin' muscle. Can you see that? There are no city boys with one of those.

My dad said, "You know, I believe you can milk. You've got the job." For the next ten years I milked from eight to twelve cows morning and night. You may rest assured that I got to the place where I did not want to milk. I said, "Dad, I don't want to milk." He said, "That's okay, you don't have to want to—as long as you do it."

I guess that is what the Lord says to us at times. I don't suppose that Abraham wanted to offer his son as a burnt offering. I know for sure that Jonah did not want to go on a mission, but he did. I was talking to a reluctant missionary one day and I said, "You know, if I had a friendly whale I could put you in for about three days, you'd probably change your mind about this."

The Lord has better methods than we do. It is vitally important that you and I learn this great lesson. If it is the will of the Lord, we do it, irrespective of whether we want to or not. It will bring tremendous blessings to us, and the Lord expects it of us. Great blessings will come, but you have to make the sacrifice before you

get the blessing. I think that is plainly stated by Moroni in the book of Ether when he said, "Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith" (Ether 12:6). You have to do it first. Nothing compares with the doing.

He Had to Pay the Price

And so the Master said he came that he could be lifted up upon the cross—"And after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me" (3 Nephi 27:14). Now, how would being lifted upon the cross draw all men unto him? We have to have some understanding of who he was and why he was here.

He came to pay the price for sin, the transgression in the Garden of Eden that brought death into the world as well as individual sins. Everyone is subject to that death. You are all going to die. No one gets out of this life alive. Some people act like they are going to, but they don't. He had to pay the price for that transgression. But he also paid the price for our individual sins because you and I are sinners. It is true, isn't it? I didn't make that up on my own. John said it.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. [1 John 1:10]

I would never say anything like that about you, but John did, and I believe him.

We are sinners. We need a savior. We need desperately to have a remission of our sins. He came to pay the price for individual sins too, and he did pay that price. Because he did, he did away with the effects of spiritual death. That is how we get back into the presence of our Father in Heaven. We have to go back without our sins. He took our sins upon him. We couldn't do that ourselves. He alone can do that. We have a song that says, "There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin" ("There Is a Green Hill Far Away," *Hymns*, 1985,

no. 194). He was without sin himself. As Paul said, though he “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet [he was] without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). He did not sin, and so he *could* pay that price.

When we come to understand that he did for us what we could not do for ourselves—and he did it because he loved us—you cannot keep from loving someone like that. His example, hanging on that cross, was the most vivid example of love you could ever see. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). And so he will draw all men unto him.

That as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father. [3 Nephi 27:14]

Looking for Happiness

The resurrection comes by the power of the Father. Everyone is going to be lifted up. Everyone will be resurrected. You don’t have to do anything to be resurrected, except be born. Congratulations. You’re going to be resurrected. But resurrection in and of itself is not exaltation. No, you have to get rid of sin. You can be resurrected in a filthy condition. That will not make you happy, and you are here to be happy. That is the object and design of our creation said the Prophet Joseph Smith. Lehi said, “Man is that he might have joy” (see 2 Nephi 2:25).

You are all looking for happiness, aren’t you? If you are not careful, you will look in the wrong place for happiness. “Wickedness never was happiness,” said Alma (Alma 41:10). The devil isn’t happy. As a matter of fact, he is miserable. He has so much misery he would love to share it with you. But you won’t enjoy it. No one enjoys hell. Not even the devil enjoys hell. He runs the place, but he doesn’t enjoy it. He wants “all men [to] be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27).

If you are not careful, you could be taken in by “Old Scratch.” He lies to you all the time.

He says things like “One time won’t hurt anything,” “Try it, you’ll like it.” Have you ever heard anything like that before? It’s a lie. One time could cost you your eternal exaltation. That is how dangerous one time is. All alcoholics start by taking *one* drink. All drug addicts start by taking *one* fix. Just kill somebody *one* time and there is no forgiveness in this world or in the world to come. You see, one time can be devastating. It doesn’t stop with one lie either. They come in bunches like grapes.

Satan follows up with further lies like, “Besides, everybody is doing it.” I want you to know that everybody isn’t doing it. Only those who are going to hell are doing it. And they will not enjoy hell, remember? Then Satan winds up with another dandy lie, “Besides, no one will ever know. It is a secret. We’ll do it in the dark.”

Did you know that the devil works in darkness? He really does. More sins are committed in the darkness than in the light. We’re trying to hide, I presume, from the Lord. Do you know what the Lord says about that? “And their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops” (D&C 1:3). Does that sound like no one will ever know? It will probably be on television. When the Lord says “It shall be spoken from the housetops,” it means that it will be common knowledge.

Listen to the Lord

So, you can’t be taken in by Old Scratch, although he lies to you all the time. You must not listen to him. Listen to the Lord. He’ll never lead you astray—never, ever. How do you listen to the Lord? Maybe you should study the scriptures. Paul said, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine.” The basic beliefs of the Church will be found in the scriptures. You need to know the doctrine of the kingdom. It is also profitable “for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of

God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Study the scriptures. It is vitally important that you do.

You must live by every word that proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God, but you must also follow the living prophet of God on earth. If the Lord is going to make any changes, he will do it through his living prophet. He does make changes from time to time, even though we say he is the same yesterday, today, and forever without shadow of changing. Yes, he was changeable yesterday, he is changeable today, and he will be changeable forever. That makes him the same, doesn't it?

He changed the Sabbath day from the last day of the week to the first day of the week. He did away with the eternal covenant he made with Abraham, the law of circumcision. He made a little change back in June of 1978. You better listen to the living prophet.

You also have to follow those that serve under him. That would be your stake president and your bishop. Listen to them. As a matter of fact, if you are going to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, you may have to obey your parents. That will test your faith, won't it? You see, they are not your parents by accident. I'm sure you were chosen before you were born. The Lord wants you to obey your parents, for it is well pleasing unto the Lord. It is even the fifth commandment. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

It is smart to obey the Lord and follow those he has selected to give you direction. If you don't do that, then you will have to repent somewhere down the line. You see, the Lord died so we could get rid of our sins. He said, "If you will come unto me and confess your sins, forsake them, and follow me, you will go free." Then, in the resurrection, you will come up with a glorious body. Those that are righteous will be righteous still. You will

look so beautiful, no one will be able to describe you. Isn't that what they say about angels, "whose brightness and glory defy all description" (JS—H 1:17)? Nobody has been able to describe one yet. Think about that.

"Do Not Procrastinate the Day of Your Repentance"

And so everyone is going to be resurrected. There are going to be a lot of people resurrected that will not want to be, but they are going to get it anyway. So you are going to get it and you better get ready for it. Why are all resurrected? "To stand before me to be judged whether they be good or whether they be evil" (3 Nephi 27:14). Then we are resurrected so we can be judged, and you are going to be judged on the basis of the deeds done in the flesh—so said Alma. That means we all came in the door marked "birth" and we are all going out the door marked "death." But we are going to be judged on the basis of what we do while we are here—not by what we did before we were born and not by what we do after we die.

You are not going to be here very long. You will only be here approximately eighty years. Compared to the eternity on either side of mortality, that is a snap of the fingers. You can do it! You can stand to have your foot in a vise for a while if you know it is going to be released. It is when you don't think you are ever going to get rid of it that it becomes unbearable.

Old Scratch will try to make you think that mortality is forever. It isn't. Remember, it is just a snap of the fingers. Whatever sacrifice the Lord asks you to make, you can do it. "And then, if thou endure it well," he said to the Prophet, "God shall exalt thee on high" (D&C 121:8).

Yes, you will be judged on the basis of what you do while you are here. Now, don't get the idea that you are going to change when you die and it will be easier then. After all, this body causes me lots of problems—it wants to eat all the time, among other things. No, you

probably won't change. Amulek didn't think so when he said:

As ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end, for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

Ye cannot say when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world. [Alma 34:33]

If you are addicted to drugs, bad habits, and evil desires while you're here on this earth, you will probably still be addicted after you die. I'm not really sure what is going on in the spirit world; I haven't been there, and I'm not going to rush it. (There might not be any racquetball courts over there.) But I have it on very good authority that there are no cigarettes there. If you go there wanting a cigarette, do you suppose you would be in paradise or prison? The answer is obvious, isn't it? Now is the day of our salvation. Now is the time for men to prepare to meet God.

You can do it—right now while you have a body to help you. This body is given to you to help you overcome everything. With it, you can do it. Without it, it is difficult. Do it while you can, while you are here, right now.

Faith unto Repentance

"For this cause have I been lifted up," said the Master, "therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works." There, he said it again. The Lord is prone to repeat things that he really wants you to understand. "And it shall come to pass, that

whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled" (3 Nephi 27:15–16). Filled with what? The Holy Ghost, of course, by the laying on of hands by a Mormon elder. You can't get it any other way.

"And if he endureth to the end"—and here I would add, "in repenting and forgiving," because you are going to have to continue with repentance and forgiveness throughout your probation here in mortality—"behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (3 Nephi 27:16). The Lord will judge the world. The Holy One of Israel employs no servants there. You get there through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the righteous judge. Now he might have some others preparing materials for him. I see the President of the Church doing that at times. But Christ is the judge, and so is the prophet of God on earth.

And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father. [3 Nephi 27:17]

That brings up an interesting word—justice. We all talk about the mercy of God. It seems that justice is always relegated to the back burner. That is because most of us are trying to avoid justice. You've heard people say, "I want to get what I deserve." That is the last thing in the world we really want, isn't it? You don't want justice, you want mercy. That surely is what I want.

Now, justice will have her dues. Mercy cannot rob justice, but mercy can satisfy the demands of justice in one instance and one only. You will find that in Alma 34.

And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal.

And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great eternal plan of redemption. [Alma 34:14–16]

And so, while mercy cannot rob justice, mercy *can* satisfy the demands of justice in one instance and one only. That is when we exercise faith unto repentance. That is where the saving power really is. It is faith unto repentance. You are going to have to repent, again and again. That is what the Lord requires of us. And so then, because of the justice of God, he can't deny his words. You have to follow him.

And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words.

And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

Now this is the commandment; Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel. [3 Nephi 27:18–21]

The Truth Is Simple

So, what is the gospel? It is the “good news.” It is the “glad tidings” about the Lord Jesus Christ, that he lives, that he did come and

pay the price for all our sins, that he made the resurrection absolute reality. He was the first fruits of them that slept. No one was resurrected before him. But because of him everyone will be resurrected.

You get rid of sin by coming unto him and making eternal covenants with him. You do that through the waters of baptism. It is for the remission of sins, and it is a witness before God that you will be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments hereafter. Then, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). That is the glad tidings. That is the beauty of it, and it is so true. It is simple; it is not complicated.

The gospel does not *contain* all truth, but it *embraces* it all. The central truth is simple and is outlined for you and me. It is an individual thing. The Lord looks upon the heart of every man and woman and child that reaches the age of accountability.

I promise you that if you experience this, you will never be the same again. It will change your life. We need to experience this mighty change in our hearts. That is the reason we send missionaries out to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people where we are permitted to go. We will continue to do that because it is the only way. It is truth; it is life eternal. It is the pathway to happiness.

Conclusion

I bear witness to you that Jesus is the Christ—that he lives. I know he lives and that he has paid the price for our sins. I bear witness that he came because his Father sent him to do precisely that. I bear witness that you have a Heavenly Father who will hear and answer your prayers. We have the kingdom of God on earth. It was established by the Lord Jesus Christ through that great prophet, Joseph Smith.

We have a living prophet of God on earth today. He is there to give us the word of God. You know that he is old and infirm. He can't

do the things that he once did. I wonder sometimes why the Lord leaves him here when I'm sure he is frustrated with his infirmities. He has the greatest zeal of any man I know, and now he can't perform as he would like to.

But I think I know why it is. As long as Spencer Kimball is alive on this earth, his stamp of approval is on everything he has said. You want to know what you are supposed to do today? Go back and see what the living prophet has said that you should do. You do that, and you will be fine. I promise that you will. As long as he is here, let us follow him.

I promise you that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into hearts, the joy

the Lord has in store for those who love him and keep his commandments. You are here to be happy. Happiness is simple. It is obedience. That is what it is all about. Joseph Smith said that "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it" (*Teachings*) p. 255). That path is holiness, virtue, uprightness, and faithfulness in keeping all the commandments of God. That is the only way to be happy. I leave you my love and blessing and my fond affection, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.