

## DAVID O. MCKAY TEMPLE ADDRESS

An address on the Temple ceremony by President David O. McKay given Thursday, 25 September 1941, at 8:30am, Salt Lake Temple Annex

(Manuscript in BYU Library Collections.)

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:20.)

Such was the commission given by the Savior to His Apostles just prior to the Savior’s return to heaven, following His resurrection. Such is the admonition and authority He has given you, my fellow workers, and I congratulate you this morning upon this calling and upon your acceptance of the privilege to preach the Gospel.

It is not only a privilege but a great responsibility to be commissioned as a missionary in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In that commission the word “teach” is used and repeated. You are teachers. Very young men and young women to go out and show the world the philosophy of life, to teach them the proper way of living, but that is your calling.

I congratulate you on being worthy to go through the House of the Lord. Your presence here indicates that you have lived a pure life, each of you, that you are worthy to go into the presence of the Father. Are you?

I have come over here this morning particularly because I have met so many young people who have been disappointed after they have gone through the House of the Lord. They have been honest in that disappointment. Some of them have shed tears as they have opened their hearts and expressed heart-felt sorrow that they did not see and hear and feel what they had hoped to see and hear and feel.

I have analyzed those confessions as I have listened to them, and I have come to the conclusion that in nearly every case it was the person’s fault. He or she has failed to comprehend the significance of the message that is given in the Temple. And so this preliminary meeting is held that we might, in a way, preview the ceremony and present, in a way, the significance of the ordinances given this day.

Now the only purpose, as I say, is that we might see more clearly, understand more thoroughly, the message of the Temple ceremony. If we can do that, then our time here this morning will not have been spent in vain.

These young people to whom I refer have become absorbed in what I am going to call the “mechanics” of the Temple, and while criticizing these they have failed to

get the *spiritual* significance.

Every word, and nearly every act in life serves two purposes; every name denotes something, but it also connotes other things. For example, when I say George Washington, the name designates or denotes a man of certain stature, rather stockily built, large, open, frank features. You have seen his picture and the name George Washington recalls to your mind that particular individual. But what else did you think of when I named George Washington? Why, the Revolutionary War; perhaps his attendance at the Constitutional Convention; some of you probably saw Valley Forge; others of you might have thought of his crossing the Delaware in winter. All of these things, though, are connoted. “George Washington” does not *denote* Valley Forge, nor the crossing of the Delaware.

Now note the change in your mind when I say “Abraham Lincoln.” That denotes a tall, rather angular man, according to himself not very good looking; but what did you think of besides seeing that tall, lanky, backwoodsman? The Civil War? Perhaps some of you thought of the letter that he wrote to the mother who had lost her sons in the War. Others thought of his monument in Washington, or of his speech at Gettysburg. All these things are connoted by that name.

President Grant designates a man of certain stature and mien. But what is connoted? I think in most of your minds, honesty. Some of you perhaps thought of his recent recovery from illness, his fearlessness in teaching religion, etc.

Now let us apply this thought to the Temple ordinances. Each act presented today will denote certain things; there will be performances, little acts and ceremonies which you may critically center your thoughts, but each one also connotes something glorious. Let us consider these as realities and also as symbols.

After the preliminaries, you will be asked to go into a room where you will be washed. Now that act of washing in itself will be insignificant. There may be some things associated with it which you might criticize. But what is the significance of it? Cleanliness. And the message of this: “Cleanliness is next to Godliness;” not just cleanliness of body alone, but cleanliness of mind, and that cleanliness of mind should have preceded your entrance into this Temple by the eradication of every ill feeling, by the elimination of every vulgar thought.

That is what it means to be clean to enter the House of God. And even as cleanliness of the body, clean linen gives to man a sense of dignity, of purity, all through life. Men who will not keep the Sabbath Day, who let their boys put on their old work clothes on Sunday and go out and work, have not a sense of the value of cleanliness upon the character of their boys. The consciousness of clean linen is, in and of itself, a source of moral strength, second only to that of a clean conscience. Some of our young people fail to see the significance of that simple ceremony.

And then listen to why you are washed. The blessings that will come to your eyesight, to your mind, to your hearing: all based upon the cleanliness of the thought and the cleanliness of your acts and your deeds.

The next little simple ceremony, I will call it little and simple because you might in your heart also consider it, is the Anointing. That, too, is performed with acts which may be done in a way that will merit criticism. I am not saying that they do not merit it if you have criticism in your heart. But let your spiritual eyes see the significance of that anointing, and then you will realize what it means to be initiated into the House of God and all its mysteries, to have in your heart as young people the spirit of emulation, the realization that anything which any other man or any other woman has accomplished, you may, through the help of God, also accomplish. You know what that means to the human soul! If you do not, then listen to what a young girl said down here in one of our institutions recently. Discouraged, down-hearted, and despondent, she said to her attendant: Leave me alone. Nobody cares for me."

Emulation dead. No place in the world for her, so she thought. That is the depth to which a person through discouragement may fall, and many have so fallen.

Not so with one who is anointed to become a king and priest of the Most High; a queen and priestess in the realms of God. Now that is what it means. I do not know how long it will take you or me to achieve that, but we are anointed that we may become such. Do not shut your eyes to the glories and open them to the mechanics, that seem so simple and are performed so awkwardly sometimes.

The prophet said: "What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the Son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor."

With these preparations we then enter upon a presentation of the truest philosophy of life ever given to man. What did the Savior say to his Apostles? "Teach them all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

You are going out to teach people the true philosophy of life, the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the

power of God unto salvation. The world is longing for it.

Now in a few short hours, here, today, will be presented to you in symbolic form that philosophy, that upward climb into the presence of God. I have used the word "mechanics," now I am going to use the word "symbolism." These ordinances will be presented in an outward way. Men with ordinary expressions, with ordinary features, in simple dramatic form, will present this philosophy. You may sit in your seat and criticize the man or the woman, if you wish; you may look at his dress and count the buttons; you may look at her dress and criticize. If you do, I am sorry for you. Or you may sit there and see through the symbolism the glory which God has given you.

For example: You will first be asked if you are willing to obey the law of Elohim; are you willing to take upon yourself the responsibility of making God the center of your lives? That is what it means. Then you will be asked if you will obey the law of sacrifice? Nature's law demands us to do everything with self in view. The first law of mortal life-- self-preservation, selfishness--would claim the most luscious fruit, the most tender meat, the softest down on which to lie.

I am taking you back to the Garden of Eden, when man entered into mortality; the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Good and Evil, and everything which man desired was placed before him. And selfishness, the law of nature, would say, "I want the best; that is mine." But God said: "Take the firstlings of the flock and offer a sacrifice unto me."

That is the story. The best shall be given to God; the next you may have. God is the Center.

Here, in your presence, I am going to thank my *earthly* father for the lessons he gave to two boys in a hayfield, in that connection. We had driven out to the field to get the tenth load of hay, and we drove over to a part of the meadow where we had last loaded the ninth, where wire-grass and slough grass was abundant, and we started to load the hay, but Father called out: "No boys, drive over on the higher ground." There was Timothy and red-top there. But one of the boys (and it was I) called back: "No, let us take the hay as it comes."

No, David, that is the *tenth* load, and *the best is none too good for God*.

That is the best sermon on the law of tithing I ever heard in my life, and it touches, I found later in life, this very principle of the law of sacrifice. You cannot develop a character without obeying that law. Temptation is going to come to you in the Mission Field. You sacrifice your appetites, you sacrifice your passions for the glory of God and you will have the blessing of character and spirituality. That is a fundamental truth.

It is easy enough to be virtuous,  
When nothing tempts you to stray,  
When without or within no voice of sin  
Is luring your soul away!  
But it's only a negative virtue  
Until it is tried by fire,  
And the life that is worth honor on earth  
Is the one that resists desire.  
By the cynic, the sad, the fallen,  
Who had no strength for the strife,  
The world's highway is cumbered today.  
They make up the sum of life.  
But the virtue that conquers passion,  
And the sorrow that hides in a smile,  
It is these that are worth the homage on earth  
For we find them but once in a while.

You can go through the movements of that law of sacrifice and see nothing but mechanics if you will, but if you do you will be disappointed. But you can sit there and commune with the Spirit and receive a message that there is a law that will help me to see spiritually through my entire life.

In the presentation of the Law of the Gospel, "the power of God unto salvation," you will be told where to find these laws specifically, which you are expected to obey--in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price; the Bible and the Book of Mormon particularly, and these others are equally important. God does not leave you without a guide. Too many of our young people throw them aside. If you are to teach, you are to study also, and today you covenant that that is what you are going to do. You cannot waste your time in the field looking after pleasure and the sights, or lounging around headquarters. You are studying to teach men the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

With these steps we rise to one of the most significant in all the world. There will be presented to you the law of chastity, and you are going to hold up your right hand that you will obey it. What is that law of chastity which will be given to you?

I am going to tell you young people now, particularly you who have heard professors say something else, that obedience to that law of chastity in this world is the source of virile manhood, and you keep it with your life, young man! It is the crown of beautiful womanhood, and you should treasure it as you treasure your life, young woman. It is the foundation of the happy, contented home. Divorce proceedings bear witness to the fatal result of the violation of that law. It is the chief contributing factor to the strength and perpetuity of the race. That is part of the philosophy of life to be presented in the House of God this

day. And if you violate it, then you will bring sorrow upon your heads. Poignantly a young man knows that fact today, who sat in this building four years ago and listened to some such admonition as I am giving you this morning.

If in our souls we can accept these laws, we are then ready, spiritually prepared, to enter the presence of God, provided we can obey the law of consecration, the next step.

The law of consecration--"my time, my talents, and all that I possess, are placed upon the altar for the advancement of the kingdom of God," and when men can attain to that spiritual achievement, they can merit what Christ said to Zacchaeus, a money-maker, a man who I think sometimes had dealt dishonestly with his fellowmen. He was a publican, a tax-collector. One day the Lord said unto him: "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house."

I do not know what happened at that dinner table. Nobody knows, except by inference, but we do know that Zacchaeus' heart was touched, and he recognized Jesus as a man of God, and when that testimony, even that glimmer of a testimony entered his heart, he said:

"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods" (I wish he had said "all", but he did not) "I give to the poor."

That was a wonderful thing for a rich man to say--"take half of what I have." "And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." And Jesus said unto him: "This day is salvation come to this house."

And when you and I can stand at a certain place in the House of God and say conscientiously and truly, "I will consecrate my life, my time, my talents to the advancement of the Kingdom of God," we are prepared through inspiration to enter into His presence.

And that is what you do at the veil, symbolically, when the veil is drawn asunder and you enter into the Celestial Room.

There, brethren and sisters, I have just briefly previewed the ordinances in the Temple of God. You will make covenants. There are certain things which belong to the Priesthood, signs and tokens that belong to the priesthood, which will emphasize the importance of the covenants you make.

Finally, in conclusion I am going to say: Are you willing to keep your word? Will you keep your promise made this day? Are you a man, or a woman of honor? Will you keep your promise? There are men in the world who are not given the responsibility which you have this morning, who prize their word of honor more than they prize their signed note.

One day in the Parliament of England, in the presence of

a gentleman, stood two men who had lent him money. To the first, this gentleman had given his note; to the second he had given but his promise. When these two men learned that this gentleman had received his income, they came for their payment. The man who had the note was surprised when his lordship said to the second: "As I cannot pay both at the same time, I will pay the first." And the holder of the note to whom the note had been given protested, saying: "Your lordship, I lent you that money first, I should be paid first." His lordship replied: "You have my signed note and promise that I will pay you. This man has only my promise, my word of honor. I will redeem my honor first."

At that, the first lender took the note, tore it up, threw the shreds into the waste basket, and said: "There, your lordship, I have but your word of honor."

"In that event, you shall be paid first."

That is how a gentleman esteemed his promise, his word.

Today you make promises with uplifted hand, and I pray God that you will have power to keep them. Go through the House of God today seeing the spiritual significance of the ordinances, that you may not come out disappointed, but filled with a desire and determination to walk uprightly before God, and thus merit His divine inspiration, not only while you are on your mission where you will need it--oh, how you will need it--but all through life when you come back to make a success of your vocation in your own life--that you may "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, that all these things may be added unto you."

I pray that this, my dear fellow workers, brethren and sisters, will be your happy lot, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.