

# *“By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them”*

DAVID B. HAIGHT

**P**resident and Sister Holland, President Dalton and all stake presidents, President and Sister Joe Christensen of the Missionary Training Center, it is a joy and privilege to meet with you this evening. What an impressive sight to look upon this vast assembly of students, stake and ward leaders, and missionaries.

President Kimball made a special request that I extend to each of you his love and greetings.

I pray for divine inspiration that I may say—that you may hear—the thoughts that are in my heart; that we may be spiritually in tune as we discuss eternal principles and obligations, truths that do not change as do worldly fashions or the short-lived ideas of men, which are popular for a season then replaced by others.

Though we live in a day of wickedness and evil when a sizable portion of mankind have forgotten God, have drifted away from His teachings, and some even fight against Him and the gospel of His Son, our responsibility as believers in Christ and members of His Church does not change.

A few days ago we listened to President Spencer W. Kimball’s lofty challenge to your new university president, Jeffrey R. Holland, to make Brigham Young University an “educa-

tional Mt. Everest, . . . [to] tower above other universities—not simply because of, . . . [the size or beauty of campus or] size of its student body . . . but by the unique light BYU can send forth into the educational world.” (“Installation and Charge to Dr. Jeffrey R. Holland, Ninth President of Brigham Young University,” Nov. 14, 1980.)

He continued, “You will do many things . . . that are done elsewhere, but you must do them better. . . . We expect you to do some special things . . . that are left undone by other institutions.”

This university, President Kimball said, “deliberately and persistently must concern itself with ‘education for eternity,’ not just for mortal time. . . . BYU must continue to resist false and capricious fashions in education, holding fast to those basic principles which have proved true and right and have guided good men and women and good universities over the centuries.”

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*David B. Haight was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 7 December 1980.*

As our prophet reminds President Holland of these standards and goals, is he not reestablishing in your hearts a personal commitment or excellence in mastering divine truths? When he holds aloft to President Holland his belief that this university will produce “brilliant stars in drama, literature, music, art, science, and all the scholarly graces,” is he not admonishing you to not be talent wasters? The Savior taught that “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20).

“Until we have climbed the hills just ahead, we cannot glimpse what lies beyond,” the President said, “hills . . . [that] are higher than we think.” And then our prophet gives us the secret: “You will not always be able to see the future, but by drawing close to our Heavenly Father you will be guided”—guided by the light of truth.

The Lord teaches us in the eighty-eighth section of the Doctrine and Covenants that the light of truth is the light of Christ—“the light . . . which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes . . . and quickeneth your understandings,” that you may know (D&C 88:11).

We draw close to our Heavenly Father through obedience to His laws and ordinances of the gospel. As we earnestly seek to draw close to Him, He has promised we will find Him.

*Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. [D&C 88:63]*

President Kimball’s recent message to this university counseled you to seek “. . . vital and revealed truths that . . . [come] from heaven,” reminding us of this constant source of spiritual blessing.

You are here so you may become more faithful and knowledgeable in God’s laws, and then to become a power for good in

proclaiming and living and teaching those holy principles with determination somewhere out in the world where you will live.

Joshua understood the challenge and decisions to be made by us all when he proclaimed, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

Aren’t we—you and I—the teachers, the examples, the protectors of Christ’s true gospel teachings? You are the leaders of the future. You will show by your example, the light you hold high for all to see, that you believe the principles of life’s true joy and have made them part of your life. The gospel is the message of peace and salvation for all men.

How honored we are to have nearly 1,600 missionaries here tonight. They are preparing to take the message of the Restoration to the corners of the earth. We want you to know we remember you in our prayers. We pray for your parents and families. We pray for your success in proclaiming—

- That God is our Eternal Father, that He lives,
- That Jesus Christ is His Begotten Son, the Redeemer of the world, and that salvation is available only through Him,
- That Joseph Smith is the prophet of the Restoration, and
- That this Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is God’s kingdom on earth.

In May 1829 the Lord said:

*A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men. . .*

*And no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things, whatsoever shall be entrusted to his care. [D&C 12:1,8]*

Recently, workers at the Mesa Temple welcomed a busload of Church members from the interior of Mexico. They had been traveling

for five days. The bus had broken down. These humble families had been sacrificing and saving their pesos for many months to buy the roundtrip tickets. They had slept on the floor of the crowded bus. President Wright of the temple said their leaders were rather embarrassed and even apologetic for their ravenous hunger, especially that of the children. After paying for the bus, there was no money for food. But that didn't matter—they were going to the temple, and they made it!

Faith? Devotion? Humble belief in God's eternal love? Can you imagine the special love Christ must have for those with such faith!

This year's Nobel Prize was given to India's seventy-year-old Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who ministers to the "poorest of the poor"—India's homeless beggars, sick, and dying, many of whom live their whole lives on city sidewalks, eating what they can find from garbage cans and sleeping in doorways. Mother Teresa herself lives in absolute poverty, clothes in a white cotton sari, eating only the simple food prepared for the destitute. Her "Order of the Missionaries of Charity" now assists 70 schools, 258 clinics, 58 leprosy centers, 25 homes for abnormal children, and 25 homes for the dying. Mother Teresa says it is not how much we do, but the love we give that really matters. She refused the traditional Nobel Prize dinner, saying she would rather the money—several thousand dollars—be given to the poor.

When honored by the Calcutta Rotary Club, Mother Teresa said, "Now I am a Rotarian. If you join Rotary to say you are a Rotarian, and come for fellowship and a meal, don't join. Become a Rotarian only if you are willing to serve (*serve*) until it hurts" (*The Rotarian*, Dec. 1980, p. 42).

Remember the words, "no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love" (D&C 12:8).

*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*  
[Matt. 25:40]

We are now preparing for the happiest season of the year when, hopefully, there is worldwide tribute to the birth of the Son of Man and is universal joy.

Why such a joyous time? Because we think of others. Reindeer, Santa Claus, music, bells, big packages, small packages, "Silent Night," "Oh, Come All Ye Faithful," "Joy to the World," cookies, mistletoe, happy family reunions. These have become part of the celebrations of Christmas. They represent our desire to share, to give, to serve, to show love and appreciation. We desire to make somebody else happy. Selfishness is replaced by a feeling to do good, ill feelings replaced by friendliness and trust. At this season, as our hearts turn to others, we get a glimpse that peace can come to earth—but only through "good will to men."

Can you who are here tonight give up selfish, petty, uncharitable feelings and attitudes and replace them with sincere concern, kindness, and helpfulness? If we believe and our actions reflect Jesus' teaching—that the greatest commandments of the law require love and that upon these two commandments hang all the other laws—we will again sing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men" (Luke 2:15).

Suppose someone living in Salt Lake City, or Provo, or Phoenix, or Washington, D.C., or Beverly Hills, happened one day to open the Bible and by that mysterious process known only to angels, chanced to read these verses in the Gospel of Luke:

*Then saith he also to him that bade him, when thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.*

*But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:*

*And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. [Luke 14:12–14]*

Suppose that man concluded that these words, probably spoken in Aramaic long ago, were just as applicable in the 1980s. Suppose that person believed that the blessings Jesus mentioned were worth having and decided to claim them. Suppose he had the courage and the love that would be required to take Jesus at His word. What do you think would happen?

One bitterly cold night, when the city was covered with a blanket of snow and ice, a man sat alone in his home. The house was very comfortable; . . . a crackling log fire in the fireplace threw dancing shadows on the paneled walls. The wind outside was moaning softly like someone in pain, and the reading lamp cast a soft warm glow on the book this man was reading.

He was alone, for the children had gone out and his wife had retired early. He read the passage of Luke, and then could read no more. Somehow he could not get away from those simple words. He had read the Bible often, for he was a good man, but never before did the words seem printed in flame.

He closed the Bible, and sat meditating, conscious for the first time in his life of the true challenge of Christ. He felt as though someone were standing behind him; he knew he was no longer alone. What strange fancy was this? Why was it that he kept hearing—in a whisper—the words he had just read?

“I must be sleepy and dreamy,” he thought to himself. “It is time I went to bed.” But it was long before he fell asleep, for still the voice whispered, and still he was conscious of the feeling of a Presence in the room. He could not shake it off. Never before had he been so challenged. He thought of the dinners and parties that they had given in this beautiful home. He

thought of those whom he usually invited. Most of them were listed in “Who’s Who”; and there were those whose names were household names in business, finance, clubs, and in government circles. There were men with the power to grant political and social favors. But they were not poor . . . or maimed . . . or lame . . . or blind.

What had put this absurd thought into his head anyhow? He tried to sleep, but somehow he could not close the door of his mind to the procession that shuffled and tapped its way down the corridors of his soul.

There were beggars with trembling lips. There were sightless eyes that stared straight in front and faces blue with cold. There were sticks tapping on the pavement. There were crutches that creaked with the weight of a twisted body.

As he watched them pass, he felt his own heart touched. He whispered a prayer that if the Lord would give him courage, he would take Him at His word and do what He wanted him to do. Only then did he find peace and fall asleep.

When the morning came, his determination gave him new strength and zest for the day. He must begin his preparations and he was impatient to go downtown. His first call was on the engraver, who knew him well. At the counter he drafted the card he wished engraved, chuckling now and then as he wrote, his eyes shining.

The clerk who read the card looked somewhat puzzled but made no comment. The card read:

*Jesus of Nazareth  
Requests the Honor of your presence  
at a banquet honoring  
The Sons of Want  
on Friday evening, in a home in this city  
Cars will be waiting*

Then, printed at the bottom of the invitation:

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [Matt. 11:28]*

In the engraving room, they did not know what to make of it; but the conclusion they reached was that someone has more money than sense, but that it was none of their business.

A few days later, with the cards of invitation in his hand, he walked downtown and gave them out, and within an hour there were several people wondering what could be the meaning of the card that a kindly, happy, well-dressed man had placed in their hands.

There was the old man seated on a box trying to sell pencils, and another on the corner with a racking cough and a bundle of papers under his arms. There was a blind man saying over and over to himself, "Jesus of Nazareth requests the honor of your presence." A fellow who was fingering a gun in his pocket and bitterly thinking of suicide wondered whether he should wait until night.

At six o'clock, a strange group of men stood waiting at the appointed corner, talking softly together.

"What is the catch in this, anyhow?" asked one cynical fellow.

"What's the game?"

"Who's throwing this feed? Anybody know the bird what gave out the tickets?"

"Well, what difference does it make? I'd stand almost anything for a feed."

And the blind man, with a little boy at his side, ventured to remark: "Maybe it's part of the government welfare program." And the cynic was saying, "Aw, somebody's kiddin' us, as if we weren't wretched enough already."

Just then someone came over and announced that the cars were there. Without a word, they got in.

Perhaps there was something strange about it all, seeing these men, clutching their thin coats tightly around their thin bodies, huddling together, their faces pinched and wan, blue with cold and unshaven, toes sticking out of shoes—climbing into two shiny limousines. It was touching to see the lame get in, dragging one foot, swinging up with a twitch of pain; and to see the blind man fumbling for the strap. At last they were all inside, and the cars glided off with the strangest and most puzzled load of passengers they had ever carried.

When they dismounted, they stood gazing at the house, its broad steps and lamps, its thick-piled carpets. They entered slowly, trying to take it all in. They were met by the host, a little nervous, but smiling. He was a quiet man, and they liked him—these guests of his whose names he did not know. He did not say much, only, "I am so glad you came."

By and by, they were seated at the table. They had looked at the tapestries that hung on the walls. They had seen the illuminated pictures in their massive frames, and the huge crystal chandelier, the concert grand piano that stood across the hall, the spotless linen, and the gleaming silver on the table. They were silent now; even the cynic had nothing to say. It seemed as if the banquet would be held in frozen silence.

The host rose in his place, and in a voice that trembled slightly, said: "My friends, let us ask the blessing." He prayed—

*If this is pleasing to Thee, O Lord, bless us as we sit around this table, and bless the food that we are about to receive.*

*Bless these men. You know who they are, and what they need.*

*And help us to do what you want us to do. Accept our thanks, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The blind man was smiling now. He turned to the man seated next to him and asked him about the host. "What does he look like?" And

so the ice was broken; conversation began to stir around the table, and soon the first course was laid. "My friends, I hope you will enjoy the dinner. I would suggest that we waste no time, for I have no doubt that you are hungry. Go right ahead."

It was a strange party, rather fantastic in a way, thought the host, as he surveyed his guests. There they were—men who otherwise might be still loitering on the back streets of the city, crouched in doorways or huddled over some watchman's fire. What an amazing thing—he didn't know the name of a single man! His guests had no credentials, no social recommendations, no particular graces—so far as he could see. But, my, they were hungry!

As he sat there talking, the stories in the Gospels kept coming back to him, and he could almost imagine that the house was one in Jerusalem. It seemed to him that these men would be the very ones that Jesus would have gathered around Him—the legion of the world's wounded, a group of friendless pieces of broken human earthenware.

He remembered what his family had said, how they had insisted on demanding, "Why? Why are you doing such a thing?" Well, why was it, anyway? Wasn't it plain? His reason was the same glorious reason that Jesus had for every miracle, for every gesture of love, for every touch of healing. It was simply because he was sorry for these people, and because he wanted to do this one thing on an impulse of love. Yet there was not a trace of condescension in his attitude. He was treating them as brothers, talking to them as though they had a right to be sitting where they were. It was a grand feeling. Never before in his life had he felt this way. These men could not pay him back! What had they to give him?

He watched each plate and directed the servant with a nod or a glance. He encouraged them to eat; he laughed at their thinly disguised reluctance, until they laughed too. As he sat there, it suddenly occurred to him how

different was the conversation! There were no off-color stories, no whisperings of scandal, no one saying, "Well, I have it on good authority." They were talking about their friends in misfortune, wishing they were here too . . . wondering whether Charlie had managed to get a bed in the charity ward, whether Dick had stuck it out when he wanted to end it all, whether the little woman with the baby had gotten a job.

Wasn't the steak delicious! And they marveled that they still remembered how different foods tasted. They wondered, most of them, who this man was, and why he had invited them all here.

When the meal was over, there was music. Someone came in and sat down at the piano. He began to play softly, familiar melodies, old songs; and then in a soft but understanding voice, he began to sing. They listened to "Love's Old Sweet Song," "Silver Threads Among the Gold," and then a march by Sousa, and then "Traumerei," and then "The Sidewalks of New York."

Someone else joined in—a cracked, wheezing voice, but it started the others. Men who had not sung for years, men who had no reason to sing—there they were, joining in. Now some old favorites: "A Bicycle Built for Two," "Suwannee River." Soon they began to request this and that, and before they knew it, they were singing hymns: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

The pianist stopped, and the guests grouped themselves in soft, comfortable chairs around the log fire. The host moved among them, smiling, his eyes shining. Then when he had settled himself again, and his guests were comfortable, he said: "I know you men are wondering what all this means. I can tell you very simply. But, first, let me read you something."

He read from the Gospels stories of One who moved among the sick, the outcasts, the despised, and the friendless; how He healed

this one, cured that one, spoke kindly words of infinite meaning to another, how He visited the ostracized and what He promised to all who believed in Him.

"Now I haven't done much tonight for you," the host said, "but it has made me very happy to have you here in my home. I hope you have enjoyed it half as much as I have. If I have given you one evening of happiness, I shall be forever glad to remember it, and you are under no obligation to me. This is not my party. It is His! I have merely lent Him this house. He was your Host. He is your Friend. And He has given me the honor of speaking for Him.

"He wants you all to have a good time. He is sad when you are. He hurts when you do. He weeps when you weep. He wants to help you, if you will let Him.

"I'm going to give each of you a Bible, His book of instructions. I have marked certain passages in it that you will find helpful when you are sick and in pain, when you are lonely and discouraged, when you are blue and bitter and hopeless, and when you lose a loved one. He will speak a message of hope and courage and faith.

"Then I shall see each one of you tomorrow where I saw you today, and we'll have a talk together to see just how I can help you most. I have made arrangements for each one of you to get back to your homes, and those who have nowhere to go I invite to spend the night here."

They shuffled out into the night, a different group from what they had been. There was a new light in their eyes—a smile where there had not been even interest before. The blind man was smiling still, and as he stood on the doorstep, waiting, he turned to where his host stood. "God bless you, my friend, whoever you are." A little wizened fellow who had not spoken all night paused to say, "I'm going to try again, mister; there's somethin' worth livin' for." The cynic turned back and said, "Mister,

you're the first man who ever gave me anything. And you've given me hope."

"That is because I was doing it for Him," said the host, and he stood and waved good night as the cars moved off into the darkness.

When they had gone, he sat again by the fire and looked at the dying embers, until the feeling became overwhelming again that there was someone in the room. He could never tell anyone how he knew this, but he knew that He was smiling and that He approved. And that night, this good man smiled in his sleep. And One who stood in the shadows smiled too, because some of the "least of these" had been treated like brothers for His sake. (Adaptations from a story by Peter Marshall.)

Of course, that never happened. It is only a piece of imagination. But why shouldn't it happen? in Salt Lake City? in Washington, D.C.? on Park Avenue in New York City? at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah?

I wonder what would happen if we all agreed to read one of the Gospels until we came to a place that told us to do something, then went out to do it, and only after we had done it began reading again?

Why don't we do what Jesus says? How exciting life would become were we to begin living according to His way of life!

Some acquaintances would say we were "peculiar." But someone else, who had these same things said about Him, would smile, and the joy and peace in our own hearts would tell us who was right.

There are aspects of the gospel that are different and sometimes difficult to understand. But our problems are not centered around the things we don't understand, but in the things we do understand, the things we could not possibly misunderstand.

This, after all, is but an illustration of the fact that our problem is not so much that we don't know what we should do. We know perfectly well.

*If you are willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world, that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem is the image of Eternal Love, then you can have the true spirit of Christmas.* [Henry van Dyke]

Love—as taught by the Savior—is the foundation for righteousness, salvation, and peace.

I share with you my witness—my personal, intimate witness—that Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of our living God, our Savior and our Redeemer, the only name under

heaven whereby we might be saved. I testify that He lives. The accounts found in the Gospels are true. And, as promised by the “two men. . . in white apparel” when He was “taken up” in a cloud, He will “come (again) in like manner.” (See Acts 1:10–11.)

May each of you bless your own homes—your children, your families—with your testimony of Him this Christmas season, I pray as I leave you my blessings, in the holy name of Jesus Christ. Amen.