

A Tribute

D. ARTHUR HAYCOCK

President and Sister Kimball, Commissioner Eyring, President Holland, students, faculty, my dear brothers and sisters—I am honored and humbled by the invitation to be with you this morning and to speak briefly about two of my dearest friends, President and Sister Spencer W. Kimball.

Sister Kimball is a most remarkable woman. She is gentle, kind, and shy. She is a woman of intelligence and culture, strength and beauty. She has an unquenchable appetite for reading and learning—an appetite it would be well for the rest of us to acquire. I pay tribute to her.

Sister Kimball is the oldest of eighteen Eyring children. It was she who set the pattern for the other members of the noble and distinguished family. She was the first of the children to leave home and get an education, and then she used part of her meager earnings to help her brothers and sisters start their own education. Some of them, as we know, have gained worldwide recognition for their scholarship. All are loved and respected by everyone who knows them.

Sister Kimball attained most of her education here at BYU, beginning in 1912. It wasn't an easy matter in those days to get an educa-

tion, any more than it is today. Here are just a few lines from Sister Kimball's own account of her first arrival at BYU:

About the first of September in 1912 I started on a high adventure—going away to school. It was hot summer when I left El Paso, so we packed my coat away in my trunk and shipped it through. When we got into the mountains of Colorado, it was snowing and the train was unheated. I nearly froze to death. I had a pair of cotton blankets in the roll that I was carrying, but I was too proud to wrap up in them until it came to the point of near freezing.

Finally when we reached Provo it was bitter cold and raining, and there was no one there to meet me.

Parents were just as anxious about the welfare of their children who were here as students in those days as they are now. When a letter did not go to her parents one week,

D. Arthur Haycock was serving as secretary to Spencer W. Kimball, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 9 September 1980.

Sister Kimball received the following night letter telegram from her father:

SAFFORD, ARIZ. 9/10/13
CAMILLA EYRING 257 S. 5th W.
 PROVO, UTAH

NO LETTER FOR WEEK (STOP) MOTHER
MUCH WORRIED (STOP) IF ANYTHING
WRONG WIRE IMMEDIATELY (STOP)
 E.C. EYRING

Sister Kimball made the following notation on that telegram, "I had not written because I did not have two cents for the stamp." I hope you students can find fifteen cents for a stamp and won't forget to write your loved ones weekly while you are here.

In a few weeks (November 17), President and Sister Kimball will have been married sixty-three years. What a remarkable example for all of us and for the world. They have been sweethearts for all those years. The dedication in the front of that wonderful biography of President Spencer W. Kimball reads simply, "To Camilla Eyring Kimball, equal partner." And so she has been all these years. She has supported and sustained him throughout all their married life. Without her, I am sure he could not have succeeded half so well as he has.

Last March, upon the occasion of President Kimball's eighty-fifth birthday, Sister Kimball read the following tribute to her husband.

How do I love thee?

On this your eighty-fifth birthday, my beloved husband, my heart is full of gratitude for the sixty-two years we have been privileged to share. They have been years filled with joy and sadness. Sharing has made the joy more fulfilling and the sadness easier to bear.

You have been patient with my foibles and have richly fulfilled my needs. Your love and understanding have helped me over the rough spots. Our

travels around the world have brought joyful and rewarding memories.

In addition to my great love for you, I deeply respect and honor your undaunted courage in meeting successfully the many challenges that have filled your life. Your complete and unwavering dedication to your callings in your service to others has been a lifetime inspiration to me.

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach."

What joy I feel for the hope of eternal life together!

Camilla

I have heard Sister Kimball speak to thousands of people in congregations throughout the world. Her words are simple and eloquent and full of the gospel message. Here is just one example:

"I am a child of God, and He has sent me here, has given me an earthly home, with parents kind and dear. Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way."

This, my brothers and sisters, is the quest of each of us. We recognize our eternal heritage as children of our Heavenly Father, each one of us. We recognize that He loves us, that He is deeply concerned for our happiness and well-being every-day of our lives.

I am grateful, as I think back of my own wonderful parents, and I look forward to the day when I will see them again. I am grateful for the almost sixty-three years that my husband and I have had together, for our children, four of them, and now for our twenty-seven grandchildren and our thirty-five great-grandchildren. The older I grow, the more I realize that there is nothing else that is so important as this family relationship and the fact that we know that if we keep the commandments of our Heavenly Father and follow the path that Christ outlined for us so specifically—that we love one another, that we serve one another—that the family will be eternal, if

we have the ordinances which have been ordained by Him which make for the eternal marriage.

A young lady came to the office the other day to see President Kimball. Her family was originally from Lithuania, now a part of Russia. She is a convert of one year and is now in the missionary training school. She wanted to tell President Kimball that she loves him and loves Sister Kimball. She said, "I saw a picture of Sister Kimball recently, and I said to myself, 'That is what my Heavenly Mother looks like.'"

President Kimball is no ordinary man; Sister Kimball is no ordinary woman. I am grateful for the privilege of associating with them and having them as friends. I salute them and bear you my witness that the Lord loves them and blesses them.

In 1957, when President Kimball developed throat cancer, he went East for an operation. (You may remember that when he returned home, he said he had gone East and fallen among cutthroats.) As he was prepared for the surgery, President Harold B. Lee was there with him, and just before they wheeled him into the operating room, President Lee stopped the head surgeon and said to him, "Doctor, this is no ordinary man you are operating on today." That, indeed, was true, and it has been true throughout President Kimball's life. He is no ordinary man. President Kimball was born and reared in humble circumstances, and that humility and that common touch are his hallmark. The Lord has had him under His watch-care from the very beginning, preparing him for the call that he would someday receive to be His prophet and to preside over His Church and kingdom here upon the earth.

The road has not been easy. He has been tried and tested all along the way. He has had typhoid, smallpox, throat cancer, heart attacks, and open heart surgery. Last fall, he had two brain operations within three months, yet he never wavers and never complains. He is

always about his Father's business, in season and out of season. He is the finest example of faith and courage and patience that I have ever seen. I sincerely believe that even Job could learn something from President Kimball. Yes, he has been tried and tested all his life, and he has been weighed in the balance but has never been found wanting.

As I work at President Kimball's elbow day after day, I feel of his great spirit and learn more and more of his great capacity for love and work. He loves people, and he loves to work. Almost daily, I have occasion to read and reflect upon some of the beautiful sermons he has given over the years. His sermons are not only stimulating, as they urge us to lengthen our stride, but they are lyrical, beautiful, powerful, and poetic. Here are just a few titles of some of those sermons:

"Absolute Truth"

"John and Mary"

"Tragedy or Destiny"

"Love or Lust"

"Hidden Wedges"

"Broken Power Line"

"Marriage and Divorce"

As you know, President Kimball has always had a great love for the Lamanites. I remember more than thirty years ago when President Kimball had been an apostle only three or four years, President George Albert Smith, whose secretary I was, called President Kimball down to his office and handed him the torch that he had been holding for many years and asked President Kimball to carry on the work among the Indians. Concerning that event, President Kimball recorded the following in his journal:

I went down to the office of President George Albert Smith at his request . . . relative to the Indians. We talked about the Navajos in the mission. He then said, "Now Brother Kimball, I want you to look after the Indians—they have been

neglected. You watch over the Indians. I want you to have charge and look after all the Indians in all the world and that includes those in the islands also."

I told him I would do my best.

From time to time, I heard people criticize President George Albert Smith for spending so much time with the Lamanites. Upon such occasions, President Smith would stand up straight and tall, square his shoulders, look the questioner in the eye, and say,

My brother, I am an old man, and in the normal course of events, I will soon be called home, and when I get to the other side of the veil I am going to seek out Father Lehi. When I find him, I will look him straight in the eye and say to him, "Father Lehi, I want you to know that while I was on earth, I did everything in my power to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to your posterity"; and I don't want to have to hang my head.

I don't have to tell you how well President Kimball has carried out that assignment given him by President George Albert Smith more than three decades ago. The Lamanites have no better friend in all the world than President Spencer W. Kimball.

Last October, Sister Haycock and I accompanied President and Sister Kimball, President and Sister Tanner, and others on a visit to the Holy Land for the dedication of the Orson Hyde Memorial Gardens. While there, we visited a number of places held sacred in the memory of Christians, and particularly Latter-day Saints, because we were walking where Jesus walked.

We visited the Garden Tomb, and after my wife and I had been sitting with President and Sister Kimball inside the tombs meditating for a time, we came out in to the sunshine and beauty of that garden. The cameramen were anxious, as always, to get pictures of President Kimball walking in the garden, but I was

concerned because the path was paved with flagstones, making it rough and uneven underfoot. I cautioned President Kimball to be careful and not fall. He responded quietly and with dignity, "Don't worry, Arthur, I am used to walking on holy ground."

We then visited the Garden of Gethsemane. We saw the small but beautiful garden with its ancient olive trees, which many believe were there when Christ knelt and prayed to His Father and our Father, just before His betrayal. Again, a film crew from BYU wanted to record the event for history. Our Israeli guides went to the priest in charge and asked permission for them to enter the part of the garden that was fenced off. Permission would be given, he said, upon the payment of 5,000 Israeli pounds per person for five minutes. For President and Sister Kimball and one photographer, that would have been 15,000 Israeli pounds, or 450 dollars U.S., for five minutes. The Israeli guides shook their heads, and one of them said, "No, this is a holy man. He came here to worship, not to pay tribute."

In addition to all his many other virtues, President Kimball has a wonderful sense of humor. While traveling in Europe a couple of years ago, it became necessary to stay over for a full week before going to Poland to finalize arrangements for official recognition of the Church in that land. I thought perhaps we could climb the Matterhorn, visit the fjords of Norway, or explore beautiful England by taking a boat trip on the Thames river, but President Kimball, instead, said he wanted to visit the missions of Italy, Austria, and Germany. He left it up to one of the members of the Council of the Twelve and myself to arrange the itinerary.

We arranged special meetings each night in a different city or country. As soon as we arrived in the first mission, President Kimball asked when the missionary meeting would be held. I promptly told him that we hadn't planned any missionary meetings that

afternoon because all of the missionaries would be attending the general meeting that night. And so it would be throughout the week. He said he still wanted a special missionary meeting. I told him the reason we didn't plan a separate meeting with the missionaries was because of the time and energy required. He replied, "I know what you are trying to do. You are trying to save me, but I don't want to be saved. I just want to be exalted!" I then went to the phone and arranged meetings all over Europe for the balance of our trip.

One day recently, about noontime, I was urging President Kimball to have some lunch and then to take a nap. He resisted, and I indicated that if he didn't do as I suggested, Sister Kimball might scold me. He looked up at me with a chuckle and a sly grin and said, "I'd a good deal rather she scolded you than me!"

One evening President Kimball stayed late at the office, so I continued working at my desk. It turned out that he was going to a dinner at the Lion House at 6:30 and was waiting for Sister Kimball to come and meet him so they could go together. About 5:30, he urged me to go home, but I told him that I would stay as long as he did. He insisted, so I said, "President, you're making it very difficult for me. I am torn between doing my duty to stay close to you and doing what you ask me to do." He looked up at me with a twinkle in his eye and said, "They both ought to be the same, hadn't they?"

I was with President Kimball when I saw the mantle of the Presidency fall upon him the day after Christmas in 1973. I had taken President Harold B. Lee to the hospital in Salt Lake the afternoon of December 26 because he was tired, and the doctor thought he ought to get a rest and have a checkup. His family had gone home for a brief period, and I was alone with him in the room when suddenly he sat up and spoke to me, the last words he said to anyone in this life. As I stood by his bed and tried

to converse with him, I saw at once that he was not responding. His face was white and covered with perspiration and his eyes were gazing beyond me. Within seconds, I called a nurse and then a doctor and then the terrifying words came: "cardiac arrest." Immediately an alarm was sounded. A team of doctors and nurses worked heroically with sophisticated equipment for more than an hour in an effort to save his life. As I watched, I became convinced that unless the Lord indeed worked a miracle that President Lee could not live. I at once called President Romney and then reached President Tanner in Phoenix and got in touch with President Lee's wife and family. Again convinced that unless the Lord took a hand there would be a change in the leadership of the Church, I felt that the next President of the Church should be present.

Therefore, I immediately went to the phone and called President Kimball, and when he heard my voice he responded in his usual cheerful manner, "Well Arthur, how are you tonight?" I said, "President Kimball, I'm not very well. President Lee is very sick. I think you should come at once." I hung up, and then realized that I hadn't even told him where we were. Nevertheless, he perceived that it was the LDS hospital and was the first one there. Soon after came President Romney and then Sister Lee and the family.

It was on this sad occasion that I learned a great fundamental lesson in priesthood and Church government. As you know, President Romney was then a member of the First Presidency, while President Kimball was the President of the Council of the Twelve. As soon as President Romney arrived, President Kimball turned to him and said, "President Romney, what would you like me to do?" President Romney said, "I'm afraid there's nothing much we can do." At the moment there seemed to be little that any of us could do, except to pray and wait. A short time later, the doctor came out and shook his head and

gave us the awful news that the Lord had spoken and that President Lee was dead. Quietly, President Romney, knowing that the First Presidency had now been dissolved, at the very moment that President Lee drew his last breath and that the mantle had now fallen upon President Kimball, turned to President Kimball and said, "President Kimball, what would you like me to do?"

In a recent conference President Kimball said:

We believe that we have in this Church the answers to all questions, for the Lord is at the head of the Church, and He has given us the program. Our message is what it has always been, and our hope is that our people will live the commandments of the Lord. They have been revealed in the holy scriptures and by living prophets throughout many years.

No, President Kimball is not an ordinary man. He is the prophet of the Lord.

Yesterday, September 8, marked the completion of forty-two years since I started working in the Church offices under President Heber J. Grant. I have served with six Presidents of the Church and have been personal secretary to four of them. With that experience, I bear witness to you, my young friends, that I know that the Lord has called and prepared President Kimball, that He loves him, that He supports and sustains him and inspires and blesses him. President Kimball could not possibly do the work that he does and carry the heavy load and responsibility that he does were it not that the Lord is hearing and answering the prayers of the millions of members of the Church and that those prayers are made manifest in blessings upon the head of President Kimball. May the Lord continue to bless him and his dear wife and prolong their lives, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.