

Forget Yourself

GORDON B. HINCKLEY

Good evening, brothers and sisters. You're really quite a picture as I see you here—tremendous, a very remarkable group. I suppose that most of you have been fasting today. I would suppose that on this campus at least 20,000 people have been fasting and that you have accompanied your fasting with earnest prayer. I think that's a most remarkable phenomenon. Most of you, I assume, have fasted and prayed with a purpose—that you might find answers to perplexing personal problems or the needs of others, or that moisture might fall upon these arid western lands. I hope you haven't prayed for snow with the hope that you could go skiing on Sunday.

I believe that the Lord will hear our earnest supplications, if we will back up our fasting and prayers with goodness in our lives. To ancient Israel he made a remarkable promise in these words:

If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. . . .

For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. . . .

And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. [Leviticus 26:3–5, 9, 12]

That to me is a marvelous promise, and I believe the Lord will fulfill his word in this day, as he promised to do anciently, if we will live as we ought to live.

Last Sunday morning I was in the home of a stake president in a small Idaho town. Before the morning prayer, the family read together a few verses of scripture. Among these were some of the words of Jesus as recorded in John 12:24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." No doubt he was referring to his own forthcoming death, declaring that except he die his mission in life would be largely in vain. But I see in this a further meaning. It

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seems to me that he is saying to each of us that unless we lose ourselves in the service of others our lives are largely lived to no real purpose, for he went on to say, "He that loveth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25). Or, as recorded in Luke, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33). In other words, he who lives only unto himself withers and dies, while he who forgets himself in the service of others grows and blossoms in this life and in eternity.

That morning in stake conference the president with whom I had stayed was released after thirteen years of faithful service. There was a great outpouring of love and appreciation, not because of this man's wealth, not because of his stature in the business community, but because of the great service he had unselfishly given. Without thought of personal interest, he had driven tens of thousands of miles in all kinds of weather. He had spent literally thousands of hours in the interest of others. He had neglected his personal affairs to assist those who needed his help. And in so doing he had come alive, and had become great in the eyes of those he had served.

A new president was installed that morning and there were many who were proud and happy concerning him; but most proud and most happy was a little man who sat at the stake clerk's table, a rural mail carrier by profession. He it was who, twelve years ago, had with quiet, patient labor persuaded his totally inactive neighbor to come back into activity. It would have been so much easier to have let that indifferent neighbor go his own way, and it would have been so much easier of the mail carrier to have lived his own quiet life. But he had put aside his personal interests in the interest of another; and that other, last Sunday, became the honored and respected leader of a great stake of Zion. As the people sustained their new president, the little man at the clerk's table wept tears of gratitude. In living beyond

himself, he had brought to life the man sustained that morning as president of the Jerome Stake of Zion. Phillips Brooks once made this significant observation: "How carefully most men creep into nameless graves, while now and again one or two forget themselves into immortality."

We recently visited an old friend in southern India. We had first come to know him twelve years ago when we went to New Delhi in response to his request that someone come to baptize him. Ten years earlier he had found a tract, but how or by whom it had come into that part of the world he did not know. He wrote to the Church offices in Salt Lake City. Other pieces of literature were sent to him, which he read. We did not baptize him when first we met him; we felt he was not ready. But we arranged for him to be taught the gospel and he was baptized some months later.

He works as an accountant in a cement plant in that part of the world. His salary is meager—less than the salary that some of you get pushing brooms around this campus. His house is small; it would fit into the front room of the homes that most of you come from. But his heart is large and overflowing. Out of a great love for others that has come of the gospel of Jesus Christ, he has built with his own hands, on a piece of ground he bought from his savings, a school. It is a simple, rough building; but here some four hundred poor children are being brought out of the darkness of illiteracy into the light of learning. What this will mean in their lives is almost beyond calculation. And near the school is another small building which he constructed with his own hands. It is an orphanage with forty-five little children, tiny babies and children up to five years of age, unwanted by others, cast away by their parents. As my wife looked at them lying on boards because he could not afford cots or mattresses, the tears welled in her eyes. But a man with a great heart and a thin purse sees those tiny undernourished babies as children

of God, and feels a great and compelling responsibility to do something to help them.

Then through his efforts, there are five small branches of the Church in those poor rural villages of southern India. Here the members have constructed three or four little buildings, neat and clean, and over the door of each is a sign, in both English and Tamil, that reads, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." The floors are concrete and without benches. To seal the concrete, cow dung mixed with water was spread on, allowed to dry, and then polished. It made for a clean-looking floor where the people sat as together we met, shared our testimonies, and partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

There are now about two hundred members of the Church among the vast millions of India. Somehow, someday, under the plan of the Lord, the time will come when the gospel will be preached in that land with power, and the harvest will follow. And someone will write the story of the Church in India. That story will be incomplete unless there is a chapter on my friend, Paul Thiruthuvadoss, a man who has lost himself in the service of others.

On that long, recent journey around the earth, we met another friend who once was on the faculty of Brigham Young University. Now his children are grown; and he and his wife concluded that rather than retire into idleness as they could well have done, and as millions of others in this land are doing, they would find someplace in the world where they could help some of our Father's children by teaching them the truths that will save them. They found such a land. They sold their beautiful Utah home; they sold their Lincoln Continental; they left friends and relatives for a distant, less comfortable place. As they have cast their bread upon the waters, the Lord has opened opportunities for them to teach and lift and help. No one can foretell the consequences of their pioneering. As I have thought of this man and woman, who have left the comforts of

their home and the society of their friends at an age when most people want to slow down and take it easy, I have thought of the words of the Lord, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29).

Generally speaking, the most miserable people I know are those obsessed with themselves; the happiest people I know are those who lose themselves in the service of others. I think there is a vast amount of that kind of misery among students. I hear much complaining—I hear complaints about the pressures of school as if it were a burden rather than an opportunity to partake of the knowledge of the earth. I even hear complaints about housing and about food. I picked from my library shelf the other evening a volume of American verse. I would like to read you the words of Lucinda Matlock from Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*.

*I went to the dances at Chandlerville,
And played snap-out at Winchester.
One time we changed partners,
Driving home in the moonlight of middle June,
And then I found Davis.
We were married and lived together for seventy years.
Enjoying, working, raising the twelve children,
Eight of whom we lost ere I reached the age of sixty.
I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed the sick,
I made the garden, and for holiday
Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,
And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,
And many a flower and medicinal weed—
Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green
valleys.
At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all,
And passed to a sweet repose.
What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,
Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?
Degenerate sons and daughters,
Life is too strong for you—*

It takes life to love life.

[*The Book of American Poetry*, p. 378]

If the pressures of school are too heavy, if you complain about your housing and the food you eat, I can suggest a cure for your problems. Lay your books aside for a few hours, leave your room, and go visit someone who is old and lonely. There are many such right here in this valley. Or visit those who are sick and discouraged; there are hundreds of that kind here, including not a few on this campus, who need the kind of encouragement you could give. If you are complaining about life, it is because you are thinking only of yourself. There was for many years a sign on the wall of a shoe repair shop I patronized. It read, "I complained because I had no shoes until I saw a man who had no feet." The most effective medicine for the sickness of self-pity is to lose oneself in the service of others.

There are some girls on this campus who are worrying themselves almost sick over the question of whether they will have opportunity for marriage. Of course marriage is desirable; of course it is hoped for and worked for and sought after. But worrying about it will never bring it. In fact, it may have the opposite effect, for there is nothing that dulls a personality so much as a negative outlook. Possibly some of you will not be married; but don't forget that there are other things in life, other pursuits to be followed. I would like to suggest that you read the story of Dr. Anne G. Osborne in the March issue of the *Ensign* magazine. Here is a highly trained instructor at the University of Utah medical school, an eminent specialist in her field, and a member of the Sunday School General Board. I like the title of her short article. She calls it, "The Ecstasy of the Agony: How to be Single and Sane at the Same Time." Speaking candidly of her age as thirty-three, she mentions marriage as a promised blessing, but she soon makes it clear that there is a stimulating and productive life

for those single young women who will get interested in serving the needs of others.

Says she,

As single Church members we can either engage in morose personal recrimination and self-flagellation, bemoaning our single status and living on the edge of desperation, or we can use this interim period in our lives as a time of active, creative waiting. . . .

[She continues,] *When discouragement weighs heavily, look around. . . . I have found that a sure cure for depression is to realize someone out there needs me. In blessing someone else, my needs and problems are quickly consumed in the warm glow of knowing that I have brightened another's life and that what I have done is pleasing to the Lord.*

[She concludes with these words:] *Let us then rejoice in this precious treasure, time, and thank the Lord for a special gift. We truly have time to become interesting because we are interested.*

I want to commend those of you who are eligible to go to the temple and who go. In this work in the House of the Lord is found the very essence of selfless service. In my judgment, one of the miracles of our day is the great consecration of time and effort on the part of hundreds of thousands of busy people, including many of you busy students, in behalf of the dead. Those of you who engage in this service know that out of it all comes a sweet and satisfying feeling. It becomes literally a medicine to cure many of the ailments of our lives. From such experience we come to realize that only when we serve others do we truly serve the Lord.

Declared the Lord in this dispensation, "Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness." And then he adds these significant words: "For the power is in them. . ." (D&C 58:27–28). The power is in us, my dear brethren and sisters—the power to do significant things

on our own initiative, if we will become anxiously engaged.

I think of some of the people who have had to do with the work in some of the areas where I have had responsibility. One able thinker, and I do not remember whether it was Emerson or Carlyle—I took them both the same semester—said that every great institution is but the lengthened shadow of a great man. I have thought, as I have met some Koreans here, of the status of our work in Korea, where today we have two strong missions and a strong stake of Zion. All of this is the lengthened shadow of Dr. Kim and the two young men who taught him the gospel while he was a student at Cornell University—Oliver Wayman and Don C. Wood. They stirred within their associate student an interest in reading the Book of Mormon. Their interest in him, their activities with him were entirely separate from the reasons for their working on an advanced degree that could have consumed every minute of his waking time, but they took time to teach and to learn; and when the Korean Ph.D. returned to his native land, he took with him his love for the Book of Mormon and for the Church whose services he had attended in Ithaca, New York. American servicemen involved in the Korean War had also shared the gospel with some of their associates. And the presence of Dr. Kim, man of learning and man of responsibility in the nation of Korea, became a catalyst that led to the establishment of the work, including the sending of missionaries from Japan. Dr. Kim is dead, but the work lives on in splendor, touching for eternal good an ever-increasing number of lives in the “Land of the Morning Calm.”

In the Philippines today we have more than 20,000 members of the Church. We have two strong missions and a stake of Zion; it is one of the more productive areas in the entire world. When the history of the work in the Philippines is properly written, it must include the story of Sister Maxine Grimm, whom some of you may

know—a girl from Tooele, Utah, who served with the Red Cross in the Pacific campaigns of the Second World War. She married an American army officer, and after the war they established their home in Manila. She did all she could to teach the gospel to others; she pleaded that missionaries be sent. Her husband had legal work done and did many other things to make it possible for the missionaries to come. It would have been much easier for them to have simply gone along their way, making money and enjoying the fruits of it; but Sister Grimm was unceasing in her efforts and in her pleas.

I had responsibility for the work in Asia at that time, and I carried her pleas to the First Presidency, who, in 1961, authorized the extension of formal missionary work to that land. In May of 1961 we held a meeting to begin the work. We had no place to meet and received permission from the American Embassy to do so at the American Military Cemetery on the outskirts of Manila. There, where are solemnly remembered the sacrifices of more than 50,000 men who gave their lives in the cause of freedom, we gathered together at 6:30 in the morning. Sister Grimm played the little portable organ she had carried through the campaigns of the Pacific war, and we sang the songs of Zion in a strange land. We bore testimony together and invoked the blessings of heaven on what we were to begin there. Present was one native Filipino member of the Church.

That was the beginning of something marvelous, the commencement of a miracle. The rest is history, discouraging at times and glorious at others. I was there for the area conference held a year and a half ago with President Kimball and others. Some 18,000 members of the Church were assembled in the great Aranetta Coliseum, the largest indoor meeting place in the Republic. I wept as I thought of the earlier years, and I remembered with appreciation the women who largely forgot her own

interests as she relentlessly pursued her dream of the day when the Church would be strong in the land in which she then lived, bringing happiness of a kind previously unknown to thousands of wonderful people. But, you say, if we were in an exotic place like the Philippines, we would do likewise. I would hope so. But let me say that opportunities are all around us to stretch our lives and our interests in behalf of others.

The other evening in Phoenix, Arizona, I interviewed a young man who had traveled for four or five hours to see me. He wanted to go on a mission, but his previous behavior had cast a serious cloud over that possibility. He told me that he had been totally divorced from the Church, as had been every other member of his family. But at his job he met a man who was a member of the Church and who lived in the same ward in which he lived, and the man asked the bishop for the opportunity to try to touch this boy. The man started by telling the boy that he was a home teacher. The boy asked what that was. The man explained, and invited the boy to go with him. The boy, out of curiosity, agreed to try it. They went the first time; it wasn't too bad. Another time followed. The man suggested that the boy read the Book of Mormon.

"Who do you think I am that I would take time to read that long book?" was the response.

The man pleaded with the boy, "Read just five minutes a day."

"Not on your life," came the reply.

"Then read just one minute a day," the man challenged.

The boy finally agreed to read one minute a day. A glow came into his eyes as he told me that the one minute became five minutes, and then thirty minutes, and then an hour, and he added, "That's why I've driven five hours to come to see you, to see if I can go on a mission."

Well, in conclusion I just want to say to you who are here tonight, forget yourselves and reach out. Occasionally, put in the background your own personal, selfish interests. Reach out in service to others. In so doing, you will find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:35). Those words are as true today as when they were first spoken. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

I have known a little of that of which I speak tonight. I testify that it is true. I testify that God, our Eternal Father, lives. I testify that Jesus is the Christ. I testify that this is their work. I invoke the blessings of heaven upon each of you as you reach out to help others, that in so doing you may find your true selves and bless greatly the world in which you live. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.