

A Wonderful Summer

GORDON B. HINCKLEY

My dear friends, I am honored by the opportunity to speak to you. I am honored by the large numbers gathered here this evening. When I agreed to come at this time I did not realize that school would not yet be in session. When I think of the date I ask, “Can it really be September? Is the summer gone? Where did it go?”

Reflecting on this, there came into my mind two verses of a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith in Kirtland on March 7, 1831:

Hearken, O ye people of my church . . . ; hearken ye and give ear to him who laid the foundation of the earth, who made the heavens and all the hosts thereof, and by whom all things were made which live, and move, and have a being.

And again I say, hearken unto my voice, lest death shall overtake you; in an hour when ye think not the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended, and your souls not saved. [D&C 45:1–2]

I hope that yours has been a good and profitable summer, a soul-enriching summer, and that you are ready for the challenge of months of study and learning that lie ahead.

Witnessing Marvelous Things

I think I would like to tell you of my own summer just past. I hope you will not think it egotistical if I do so. I pray something I say may find lodgment for good in the hearts of each of you.

Except for one or two rather difficult episodes, it has been a wonderful summer. I have not traveled as a tourist. I have not been to the beach and walked in the sand. I have not been to resorts or places of fun. In fact, with the exception of a half dozen days, I have been in my office up against the stresses that are felt there. This has become a very large church with a tremendous organization. It is now established in more than a hundred nations. There are decisions to be made every day, and some of these are difficult. The guidance of the Lord is sought in all of these deliberations. The work is demanding, but there is something

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wonderfully stimulating in the very challenge of it.

It is a marvelous thing to sit where one can see, at least in some measure, the whole broad encompassing picture of this great throbbing, viable, growing phenomenon the Lord has called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This summer I took a few days away from the office, as I said. Some were spent in these beautiful mountains. Everyone ought to go into these mountains occasionally. Everyone ought to look up into the blue of the sky, let his eyes search the long distances of valleys and peaks, revel in the beauty of the trees, the ferns, the wildflowers that bespeak the creations of God.

I live in a filing cabinet, a condominium. It is a comfortable place to live, but I think men and women and children were not intended to so live all of their days. So I have held on to a little patch of ground in the country. Here I can go to get my fingers in the soil. Here I can dig and plant, cultivate and irrigate, prune, and eat fruit from my own trees. And so I spent a few days, as I think everyone should, perspiring in the sun, stirring the earth, and witnessing the miracles of nature. How wonderful a thing it is to stand on the soft earth after the sun has set and darkness comes, and then to look up into the heavens and see the stars of the firmament.

As I walk about my little cluster of trees, my feet on the fruitful earth, there wanders through my mind the words of the seventh chapter of Revelation (verses 2–3) interpreted by Joseph Smith in section 77 of the Doctrine and Covenants: “And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried . . . saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” Even without reference to the theological meanings of this declaration, I like the injunction: “Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees.”

I look up to the stars and sense in some small degree the majesty and wonder and magnitude of the universe, the awesome greatness of its Creator and Governor, and the implications of my own place as a child of God.

Speaking of the stars and the heavens, I have had two wonderful experiences this summer—three in fact. I watched on television a replay of the landing on the moon that occurred twenty years ago. I marveled again at the wonder of the mind of man as I saw Neil Armstrong put his foot into the lunar dust and heard him say, “That’s one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.” I watched with wonder as he and his companion walked about, then as they again boarded their small craft and rose into the firmament of the moon to be picked up by their spaceship and returned to earth. I still can scarcely comprehend it. But some of you, in your studies at this great university, will become masters of the techniques that made it all possible.

The other thing that absolutely enthralled me was the descent of Voyager II to within 3,000 miles of Neptune. I got up at three o’clock in the morning to watch the pictures that were relayed back to earth, requiring four hours for transmission at 186,000 miles per second.

It was twelve years ago that Voyager left planet earth to undertake a journey of 4.4 billion miles, traveling at 61,000 miles an hour, led with precision to that celestial orb we call the planet Neptune.

Now Voyager goes on, out into outer space to the edge of the universe.

Did you watch it? Did you experience the awesome feeling that I did? Did you wonder why, if man can do such remarkable things, he cannot live together in peace with his brothers on this earth? Did you stop and reflect on the wonders of the human mind when that mind devotes itself to constructive rather than destructive things? Why do we spend our personal resources in conflict and

acquisitiveness, in litigation and name-calling when we are capable of things so much greater and more wonderful?

I noted in the *Wall Street Journal* the other day an editorial that began with this quotation from Francis Fukuyama, an official in the U.S. State Department. He wrote:

The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called for daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands.

I cannot accept that thesis. I cannot believe we face centuries of boredom. This great institution, this BYU, where you sit at the feet of an able and stimulating faculty, will bring to you the realization that man has scarcely scratched the surface of the wonderful challenges that lie ahead in improving the human soul and personality.

My dear young friends, reach out to those challenges. Fill your minds with all of the learning of the past that is to be absorbed here, and then face the wonderful challenges of our day and of the future.

The other evening I looked through the trees at the eclipse of the moon. The earth for a short time had placed itself directly between the sun and the moon. There was nothing boring about what I saw. There was something tremendous in recognizing the celestial clockwork that brought into play that wonderful pattern with an exactness that could be calculated precisely by those who understood, if only in a meager way, the wonders of the creations of the Almighty.

I read also with excitement this summer of the discovery of a gene that could lead to a cure for cystic fibrosis. I thought of a little boy I once knew. As a baby he came into a home

where he was welcomed and cuddled and loved. But as the months passed it became apparent something was wrong. His lungs did not function properly. He had what the doctors called cystic fibrosis. He would be under severe handicaps for as long as he lived, and he would not live for long. His parents worried and prayed and watched over him as he struggled for breath and strength. They spent their resources in an effort to provide for him and help him. He died while yet young.

There are tens of thousands like him. There are hundreds of thousands afflicted with other genetic diseases. What a remarkable and wonderful thing that in this summer of 1989 dedicated men of science are at last on the trail of a way to mitigate what have been the unending pains and trials of these crippling and fearsome diseases.

These have been some of the things of my wonderful summer along with a little reading of good books, a little enjoyment of good music, and some association with treasured family and friends.

Four Memorable Events

But exceeding all of these have been four dedication services in which I have participated. If you will permit me, I would like briefly to tell you about them.

The first, in June, was at Carthage, Illinois. The second, in July, was on the state capitol grounds in Salt Lake City. The third was in mid-August in Lake Oswego, Oregon, a suburb of Portland. The fourth took place at a dry and dusty little hillside in the desert to the west of us. Each involved speaking and the offering of a dedicatory prayer. All were concerned with the wondrous work of which each of us is a part.

On June 27, 1989, I stood beside President Ezra Taft Benson where Hyrum and Joseph Smith were martyred on June 27, 1844. For some years the Church has owned the old Carthage Jail where that tragic event occurred.

Recently we acquired the remainder of the block, and through the generous contributions of faithful Latter-day Saints we have beautified it, erected a handsome statue of Joseph and Hyrum, and provided an enlarged visitors' center where those who care to learn may be given the facts of what once occurred there.

That beautiful block, the scene of a terrible tragedy, has become a fitting memorial to the lives of two special servants of God who there sealed their testimonies with their blood.

We thank the Lord that the old animosities that brought about that tragedy have evaporated, and that today there is goodwill and mutual respect and appreciation. But we must never forget the divine calling of the prophet who died there. John Taylor was in the jail with Joseph and Hyrum and Willard Richards on that occasion. He was savagely wounded. In giving the summary of the events of that day, among other things he wrote these words:

Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated! . . .

. . . Their innocent blood on the banner of liberty, and on the magna charta of the United States, is an ambassador for the religion of Jesus Christ, that will touch the hearts of honest men among all nations. [D&C 135:3, 7]

I have been to Nauvoo and Carthage many times. I am always deeply affected when I walk where Joseph walked and when I stand where he was shot and killed. "Great is his glory and endless his priesthood. Ever and ever the keys he will hold. Faithful and true, he will enter his kingdom, Crowned in the midst of the

prophets of old" ("Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 27).

Let it be remembered, my dear friends, by everyone of us here tonight, that we would not be here, that this great institution of learning in which you are enrolled would not exist were it not for the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the testimony of the reality and divinity of his calling that burned in the hearts of his contemporaries and followers who laid the foundation of this great work that so richly blesses our lives.

Yours will be the opportunity, in the courses you take here, to study his life, to read the Book of Mormon he translated and brought forth by the gift and power of God, to draw strength and inspiration from the revelations that came to him and through him by the power of the Almighty. Do not set aside or take lightly John Taylor's testimony that this man, the prophet of this dispensation, who died at Carthage at the young age of 39, did more, "save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it."

I add my testimony that Joseph was and is the great prophet of this dispensation of the fulness of times, that he was raised up by the God of heaven, that he was tutored and directed by the risen Lord Jesus Christ and also by angels who were sent from the heavens to restore the everlasting priesthood with all of its powers and keys to reestablish the Church of Jesus Christ in the earth and to set in motion a cause and kingdom that will spread to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

The second prayer of dedication I offered this summer was given at a marker pointing to Ensign Peak north of Salt Lake City. It was this peak that Brigham Young and his associates climbed a few days after their arrival in the Salt Lake valley. From its summit they surveyed the sage-covered lands before them where they would create a city and build a temple to their God. And on that peak, on that Monday in July

of 1847, they raised an ensign to the nations. Their banner was probably only Wilford Woodruff's bandanna handkerchief. Much more significant was the vision these men had of the cause in which they were engaged. Here they were in this desert outpost, a thousand miles from the nearest settlement to the east and 800 miles from the Pacific, isolated and alone, and yet they had an understanding of the destiny of this work, a great millennial vision of its eventual spread across the earth as the church and kingdom of God.

That small marker was erected and dedicated as a reminder to all that from the very beginnings of these communities in the valleys of the West there was felt an incumbent responsibility to carry the gospel message to the nations of the earth, to establish here in the tops of the mountains a temple of God to which those whose hearts had been touched by the Spirit might come to learn and partake of eternal blessings, and to build the kind of society that would be in harmony with the will of the Lord.

The third dedication was of the Portland Temple on August nineteenth. It continued on through three days. Approximately 41,000 people participated in it.

It is a beautiful building, but it was not built to adorn the landscape. It was built as a house of the Lord, a witness to all who should look upon it of the conviction of this people that life is eternal, that death is not the end, that we shall go on living and doing and working on the other side of the veil even as we live and do and work here.

It is a sacred and beautiful and wonderful house of God where ordinances that are everlasting in their consequences may be performed in behalf of both the living and the dead. It is a house in which the eternal keys of the priesthood will be exercised to seal in the heavens that which is sealed upon the earth.

It has become the forty-second working temple of the Church, similar to the one that

stands on the bench land to the east of us. Great is the privilege of those who are authorized to enter therein. My plea to you this evening, my dear young friends, is that you so conduct your lives that you will feel at home in the house of the Lord.

Then, on August twenty-eighth, I went out to Skull Valley, which is about seventy miles west of here. I was there with a group of two or three hundred people, most of them Hawaiians or Polynesians from other islands of the Pacific. We were there to commemorate a significant event. One hundred years ago, on that very day, about fifty Hawaiian Saints moved to this place to establish a colony and build a Polynesian paradise in the desert. Why had they come to Utah? They had accepted the gospel in Hawaii, and they came that they might participate in the ordinances of the temple then under construction in Salt Lake City.

Their prospects were bleak, but they set to work. They drew lots for homesites. They constructed houses and barns, a school, and a meetinghouse; they planted trees, hundreds of them; they planted flowers and grass, bringing the water from the mountains to the east to keep things green and growing. Their numbers increased. The cold winters and the hot summers were hard on them. Seventy-nine of them died and were buried in the little cemetery we dedicated last Monday. Their descendants, out of love and respect, have now beautified that cemetery and erected a suitable monument.

Iosepa means Joseph in the Hawaiian language. The community was named for President Joseph F. Smith, who had labored among the Hawaiians as a missionary and who loved them as they loved him.

They stayed in Iosepa for twenty-eight years, and when President Joseph F. Smith announced that a temple would be built in Hawaii, then, and only then, they decided to leave. They did so reluctantly, the women not wishing to hurry, but walking all of the fifteen miles from Iosepa to the railroad, looking back

with fondness and love on that which they had created in the desert.

The green is no longer there. The streets and buildings have largely disappeared and been reclaimed by the desert. But Iosepa was not a failure as some have thought. It was a testimony to the faith of good people in the things of God as represented in the teachings and practices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. May the Lord bless the memory of those who built it, of those who died there, and may he bless those who with loving hands have worked so faithfully to preserve the memories of the past.

For me it was a great thing to go out to Iosepa. For me it was a wonderful thing to participate in the dedication of the Portland Temple. For me it was an enriching experience to reflect on those who stood on Ensign Peak and looked across the centuries with a millennial view. To me it was a sacred and wonderful thing to be again at Carthage and pay homage to the prophet who died there and to his beloved brother who died at his side.

My dear brethren and sisters, I have told you these things as reminders of the tremendous heritage that is yours and the tremendous price paid for it. Hard was the work of those

who have gone before us. Magnificent is our heritage. Tremendous is our responsibility. As I have given you a few personal notes from the diary of my summer, I have done it with the hope that there might be stirred within you a profound sense of gratitude for the magnificent and wonderful blessings that are yours, together with recognition of a great and stirring challenge accompanied by strong resolution to keep the faith of your fathers, to add to your marvelous inheritance, to train your minds and hands and hearts, to strengthen all that is good in the world in which you live, and to grow with understanding as you walk the frontiers of knowledge at this great scene of learning both secular and divine.

I express unto you my love for you. You are in very deed my brethren and my sisters and my friends. God bless you. I leave with you my witness and my testimony of the divinity of this work. I challenge you to go forward with faith to the great future that lies ahead of you if you will walk in obedience to the commandments of God and train your minds and hands and hearts at this great and remarkable and unusual university. I leave my blessing upon you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.