

Filling the Measure of Your Creation

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When my daughter, Mary, was just a small child, she was asked to perform for a PTA talent contest. This is her experience exactly as she wrote it in her seven-year-old script.

What Can I Be?"

"I was practicing the piano one day, and it made me cry because it was so bad. Then I decided to practice ballet, and it made me cry more; it was bad, too. So then I decided to draw a picture because I knew I could do that good, but it was horrid. Of course it made me cry.

"Then my little three-year-old brother came up, and I said, 'Duffy, what *can* I be? What can I be? I can't be a piano player or an artist or a ballet girl. What can I be?' He came up to me and whispered, 'You can be my sister.'"

In an important moment, those five simple words changed the perspective and comforted the heart of a very anxious child. Life became better right on the spot, and as always, tomorrow was a brighter day.

All of us face those questions about *our* role, *our* purpose, *our* course in life—and we face them long after we are children. I visit with enough of you (and I remember our own university years well enough) to know that many

of you, perhaps most of you, have occasions when you feel off-balance or defeated—at least temporarily. And we ask, 'What will I be, when will I graduate, whom will I marry, what is *my* future, how will I make a living, can I make a contribution?'—in short, "What can I be?"

Take heart if you are still asking yourselves such questions, because we all do. I do. We *should* concern ourselves with our fundamental purposes in life. Surely every philosopher past and present agrees that, important as they are, food and shelter are not enough. We want to know what's next. Where is the meaning? What is my purpose?

When asking these questions, I have found it extremely reassuring to remember that one of the most important and fundamental truths taught in the scriptures and in the temple is that "Every living thing shall fill the measure of its creation."

I must admit that when I first heard this directive, I thought it meant only procreation, having issue, bearing offspring. And I'm sure that is probably the most important part of its meaning, but much of the temple ceremony is

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symbolic, so surely there can be multiple meanings in this statement as well. Part of the additional meaning I now see in this commandment is that every element of creation has its own purpose and performance. Every one of us has been designed with a divine role and mission in mind. I believe that if our desires and works are directed toward what our heavenly parents have intended us to be, we will come to feel our part in their plan. We will recognize the “full measure of our creation,” and nothing will give us more holy peace.

Each of Us Playing Our Part

I once read a wonderful analogy of the limitations our present perspective imposes on us. The message was that in the ongoing process of creation—our creation and the creation of all that surrounds us—our heavenly parents are preparing a lovely tapestry with exquisite colors and patterns and hues. They are doing so lovingly and carefully and masterfully. And each of us is playing a *part—our part*—in the creation of that magnificent, eternal piece of art.

But in doing so we have to remember that it is very difficult for us to assess our own contributions accurately. We see the rich burgundy of a neighboring thread and think, “That’s the color I want to be.” Then we admire yet another’s soft, restful blue or beige and think, “No, those are better colors than mine.” But in all of this we don’t see *our* work the way God sees it, nor do we realize that others are wishing they had our color or position or texture in the tapestry—even as we are longing for theirs.

Perhaps most important of all to remember is that through most of the creative period we are confined to the limited view of the *underside* of the tapestry where things can seem particularly jumbled and muddled and unclear. If nothing really makes very much sense from that point of view, it is because we are still in process and unfinished. But our heavenly parents have the view from the top, and one day

we will know what they know—that every part of the artistic whole is equal in importance and balance and beauty. *They* know our purpose and potential, and *they* have given us the perfect chance to make the perfect contribution in this divine design.

The Lord has promised us in D&C 12:7 that the only qualification required to be a part of this magnificent plan is to “have desires to bring forth and establish this work.”

Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God.

Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you. [D&C 14:4–5]

Sometimes in our sowing and reaping and sifting, it may seem that God says “no” or “not now” or “I don’t think so” when what we want for him to say—what we wish our tapestry to receive—is an affirmative “yes” or “certainly, right now” or “of course it can be yours.” I want you to know that in my life when I have had disappointments and delays, I have lived to see that if I continue to knock with unshakable faith and persist in My patience—waiting upon the Lord and his calendar—I have discovered that the Lord’s “no’s” are merely preludes to an even greater “yes.” I have learned in the twenty-five years since I was your age that the very delays and denials we worry about most, the very differences from each other that trouble our self-esteem, are the differences and delays that are the very best for our happiness and fulfillment.

I’ve often wondered of the struggles that may have plagued the mind of Moses when the Lord asked him to leave his royal privileges and position in order to serve him in abject poverty and meagerness. Contrast his mission with the Lord’s design for Joseph to stay in Egypt, to use his power and prestige for righteous purposes. Apparently Jeremiah was never given the blessings of marriage or

children although Jacob had the comfort and companionship of four righteous women and many children. Joshua seems to have been an incredibly confident, charismatic, take-charge kind of leader, but Moses was often reluctant and tentative and sometimes had to ask the Lord twice for directions. Each had a crucial—but *very* different—role to play.

Furthermore, age seems to make little difference in the diversity of this tapestry. David was a Mere child when he deftly dispatched Goliath, but Abraham was more than one hundred years old when he gave us the supreme Mortal example of faith and obedience. Esther had the wealth and attention of kings, giving her the opportunity to help save a nation, whereas Ruth was a poor, unaccepted Moabite—but one whose royal blood, ironically, carried the lineage of the Son of God himself. The Lord uses us *because* of our unique personalities and differences rather than in spite of them. He needs all of us, with all our blemishes and weaknesses and limitations.

So what *can* I be? What can *I* be? We can be what heavenly parents designed us and intend us and help us to be. How does one fill the measure of his or her creation? We do so by thrusting in a sickle and reaping with all our strength—and by rejoicing in our uniqueness and our difference. To be all that you can be, your only assignment is (1) to cherish your course and savor your own distinctiveness, (2) to shut out conflicting voices and listen to the voice within, which is God telling you who you are and what you will be, and (3) to free yourself from the love of profession, position, or the approval of men by remembering that what God *really* wants us to be is someone's sister, someone's brother, and someone's friend.

I bear my testimony that each of you has a purpose. It is different, it is distinct, it is divine. God lives. God loves you. And I do, too. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.