

“The Marvelous Work the Lord Can Do Through Us”

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Recently, I was released from years of service as the nursery leader in my ward. Early on, I learned what lesson got the best reactions from these cute children, if I held up a picture like this and simply asked, “who is this?” nearly every child would proudly, and instantly, reply, “Jesus!”

This quickly became a routine at the end of each nursery class. Then one day, I simply added, “Do you know that the Savior loves you?” In that moment I felt the Spirit whisper to me, “that’s the message you need to keep sharing.”

So today, I want to begin by relaying this simple message to you. Do you know that the Savior loves you? And can I add, do you know that the Savior is aware of you? He knows you so profoundly; every trial, every fear, and every concern. He also knows every talent, every desire, and every hope. My prayer is that in the next few minutes we may unite our faith and love for the Savior and continue to become more like him.

Last year, Sister Reyna Aburto beautifully stated, “We are The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with Christ at the head and the prophet as His mouthpiece...let us realize how privileged we are to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ, where we can unite our faith, hearts, strengths, minds, and hands for Him to perform His mighty miracles...My fellow disciples of Christ, let us not underestimate the marvelous work the Lord is doing through *us*, His Church, despite our shortcomings.”

Sister Alburto went on to say, “‘as the peaceable followers of Christ’, we are striving to become ‘of one heart and one mind’. We are striving to become like Jesus Christ.”¹

Let us take a minute to really focus on our Savior, the one we are striving to become like. The scriptures teach us that Jesus Christ “went about doing good”². He fed others. He washed feet.

He prayed. He healed. He taught. He served. He loved. He gave sight. He gave hope. He calmed. He asked. He cried. He died. He came back. He stopped. He stayed. He bled. He forgave. He invited. He is our perfect example, and *He* has invited *us* to not only become like Him but to play an active role in inviting others to come unto Him.

Today, I want to focus on four simple ways we can be a part of *this* great work while actively inviting others to come unto Him.

1. Minister to the Multitude

This is my daughter Kamree (*photo not available*). Last week, she completed her freshman year at BYU and next week she will begin her full-time mission. When Kamree was a junior and senior in high school, she went through a pretty intense trial. It was a year when emotions ran high and as a family, we had to learn to navigate some new waters. It was an intensely prayerful year. During that time, Kamree was required to complete a “senior project”. Part of our family had done some work with an organization called World Relief; their mission is to help relocate Refugees. As a family, we had simply gone to their warehouse to help build furniture, organize, and clean.

In *one* visit we fell in love with the mission of this organization! When Kamree learned about our experience, her heart was instantly touched. She got in contact with the director and asked if she might hold a food drive for incoming refugees. The answer was actually *no*. It was explained that in most food drives people donate out of date *unwanted* foods. Most refugees had particular diets and so most food that would be donated would probably not be useful. So, Kamree asked if she could get a specific list of needs, and that is how it began. For one month, Kamree requested foods like kava flour, oil, rice, and beans. Each week small donations came in—each person giving what they could—like two or three bags of beans, a bottle of oil, a sack of flour, etc.

This is Kamree the day of delivery (*photo not available*). 1,592 pounds of food! The gratitude expressed by World Relief was unfounded. That day a 17-year-old girl made a big difference by simply asking others to contribute what they could.

I am reminded of what it must have been like on a hillside so many years ago when 5,000 or more gathered to hear the Savior speak of a better life filled with peace and security. Many had travelled long distances to hear the Savior, but as the day grew on, they were tired and hungry.

You know this story. You know that Jesus did not send the multitude away, but instead he invited them to sit and the seemingly impossible happened: the multitude was fed!³

This account is recorded in all Four Gospels but there is a detail in John’s account that tugs at my heart.

When the Savior invites the disciples to feed the multitude Phillip answered, “Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone of them may take a little...”⁴

Are we ever like Phillip wondering how the little we have could ever be sufficient? Do we ever ask, can my contribution even make a difference?

But then one of the disciples said, “There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among many?”⁵

Jesus then invites them to sit...and then they are filled!

How grateful I am for John and the detail he gives us of the “lad” that gives what he has brought to that hillside. Could this lad have known when he picked up his basket the miracle that would be instored that day? Did he understand what the Lord could make of his offering?

That is what Kamree reminded me of. Even in the midst of her own struggles and surroundings, she was one individual willing to offer her own “loaves and fishes”⁶. This experience would become one that would help Kamree find out how the Lord could not only help others through her efforts, but it would also become an experience that would allow Kamree to see how the Lord could “feed” her.

We are all lads—His children—and we have been invited to make a difference in the communities that surround us. Our involvement can look different by contributing to food banks, volunteering at local charities, teaching community classes, and helping out at schools.

What difference can you make to the multitude and community that surrounds you? I do know this: there is a work for you to do, and you are needed in this work!

2. Carry Your Corner

A few months ago, I was facilitating a gospel doctrine class. We had been in the scriptures discussing how the Savior shows up in our lives, and then we took a few minutes to look at the characters in the scripture blocks that we were studying, specifically those who had come with faith and been healed by the Savior. I asked the question, “Of those we have studied, who do you want to be?”

After a few responses, I noticed over in the corner of the room an older man raised his hand. I knew this man; I knew that he had walked with a walker for the past decade or more. I was fully expecting his answer to be, “I want to be the one who is healed.” But to my surprise, with all the charm of his southern accent, his answer was this, “I want to be one of them that bore the friend with the palsy. I want to carry a corner. I want to be someone that brings others to Christ.”

This account is found in Mark 2, where Jesus was found in a crowded house, and there simply was no room. The account says, “And they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw *their* faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”⁷

This is one of my favorite stories of unity, where people joined together to bring a friend to the Savior. Again, I love the response, “I want to be one of them that bore the friend. I want to carry a corner.”

Bearing their friend could not have been an easy thing. There was a time when they could not move because “the press” was too thick. This may happen to us. There will be obstacles. We see a glimpse of the determination of *these* friends; they had to climb on the roof, they had to break it apart. But it was *their* faith that healed their friend.

In most cases we are not called to do a work alone. We can lift where we are called and help carry the load. What corner are you currently called to carry? I know that as we bring those we love to the Savior, He will see our faith. He not only can make others whole, but He can make us whole as well. What a blessing to be a part of this great work!

3. Make Room for the One and Wait for the Savior to Come

I currently have a favorite book in the New Testament; it is the book of John. I want to take you to one of my favorite parts in chapter 20. It is in this chapter that the Lord has taught me a profound lesson about making room.

Chapter 20 contains the account of Thomas. You are familiar with Thomas; he has been a devoted disciple of the Savior. The Savior has died and has appeared to his disciples, all it seems, except for Thomas.

Then “came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”⁸ What a glorious experience for the disciples to see the resurrected Savior and to feel his hand and see the prints in his feet. “Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.”⁹ “But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”¹⁰

I have pondered these verses over and over and my heart simply aches for Thomas. Where was Thomas? Why of all the experiences did he have to miss this one? Was Thomas out ministering or visiting a sick ward member? Was Thomas alone somewhere in prayer? Perhaps he was just busy completing regular, mundane, daily tasks. In pondering these things, I see myself in Thomas. Sometimes my experience is not the same as others. Sometimes I have felt that I “missed” it and that I have simply been left out and forgotten! In my mind, I see beloved Thomas, who early on in Christ’s ministry, is quick to defend and stand in allegiance. My heart feels Thomas’ pain; The Savior has come and gone, and he has missed it!

Can we not hear ourselves in Thomas' famous cry, “except I shall see in his hands the prints of the nails and put my finger into the prints of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe”?¹¹ Have you ever uttered a similar cry? Have you ever wanted proof or assurance; have you ever wanted an experience...

Hidden in verse 28, however, is a profound lesson about ministering and the difference we each can make to each other.

“And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them, then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst, and said, Peace be unto you.”¹²

Can you see a lesson in this simple verse? Thomas is *with* the disciples. Even though he has missed an experience, he has been invited to stay with the believers! They have made room for him! When we have had an experience, do we invite others to be with us? Our lives can be full of ministering moments that allow us to gather, accept, teach, and provide a place of safety for those that are willing and trying to come to the Lord. We can be ministers and make room for others.

I am happy for Thomas that it was only eight days later that the Lord again appears, but I hope that if it is eight days, eight weeks, eight months, or eight years, we will continue to invite and gather others, making room for all of God’s children!

Who can you make room for? What comfort can your hands be to someone in need? There is someone who needs your unique talents and abilities, someone you can befriend, strengthen, and invite.

4. Show Up at the Ship

Will you now go with me to John 21? I wish we had time to study all the lessons we could learn in just this chapter, but we only have time for a couple verses in this account. Again, this is a story so many of you are familiar with.

The resurrected Savior has left the disciples. It says, “There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.”¹³

As a young girl, whenever I heard this Bible story, I often heard comments about why Peter returned to fishing, in this moment, after the Savior’s death. I heard things like, “Fishing is what Peter knew, he was returning to his old way of life, without the Savior’s guidance Peter probably felt lost.” Perhaps there is some truth to these thoughts and comments, but, recently as I studied and pondered this account, something came to my mind. I saw Peter, beautiful faithful Peter, being called as a disciple. Peter’s first recorded experience with the Savior, *where the Savior found him*, was while he was on a fishing boat.

You’ll remember this account in Matthew, “And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”¹⁴

I cannot help but wonder if Peter, uncertain of what to do now that the Savior has left again, felt a little lost. Could it be that Peter returns to the very thing he was doing when the Savior *first* came to him. Fishing! To me this is a beautiful thought, it is one I can relate to. It is an action that is full of faith. Peter is setting for us an example of what to do when we are lost or

unsure...we can go back to what we once knew. We can return to times and places when we have seen and felt the Savior's influence in our lives!

A few years ago, I found myself struggling. I was sitting at my desk rereading this account in the scriptures and I sent my husband the following text: "I'm going fishing!" Now you need to know that I do not own a fishing pole. Unaware that I was having an emotional meltdown (or the connection I was making with this particular scripture), my husband's immediate reply was, "uh, okay?" followed by this, "Can I go with you?" I sat there at my desk and the tears came. I understood a little of how Peter must have felt when he declared his intent to return to his ship, and his beloved friends, I imagine, not wanting Peter to be alone, boldly declared "We go with thee!"¹⁵

I want to be like *those* disciples! When others are seeking, feeling lost, or unsure, I want to be a part of their journey! I want to be someone they can count on. I want to be someone that will show up to wherever and whatever their ship looks like. I want my response to be a quick, "I'm coming with you!" Will you be one of those disciples? Will you be there when those you love "go fishing?"

One more verse in this account says, "But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw in for the multitude of fishes. Therefore, *that disciple whom Jesus loved* saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, and did cast himself into the sea."¹⁶

Today I want to focus on one last detail that often gets overlooked in this verse, but is relevant. I love that it is John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved"¹⁷, that exclaims and points out to Peter that the Savior is on the shore. His declaration is simple, "It is the Lord"¹⁸. I want to not only show up at the ship, but I also want to join with John, I want to be pointing and directing others to the Savior.

Directing can be simple. It is a willingness to declare to others who God is, that God is aware of us, and that he loves us.

This past year I started a new adventure working as a secretary in the front office of my children's school. I live in North Carolina where southern roots run deep; this often includes stated opinions and bold declarations. My favorite thing about the south is that most people are willing to declare to you how much they love the Lord, and they are quick to "bless your heart" and to invite you to come to Jesus. This happens in Walmart, at schools, and in neighborhoods. When they recognize His hand in their life, they are not afraid to share it with you.

Recently a colleague of mine told me, in a candid conversation, "God is in charge of this work. I prayed you here, and God has answered my prayer." Do you know what that comment did for me? Not only did it put a bounce in my step, but it has made me want to truly be an answer to her prayers.

Are you willing to show up on the ship when others go fishing? How can you join with John, and boldly declare to others that you know the Savior? Your declaration, your voice, is needed! May I conclude with an invitation and promise from our beloved prophet. This will not be new, but it is a beautiful reminder, “My dear sisters, you have special spiritual gifts and propensities. Tonight, I urge you, with all the hope of my heart, to pray to understand *your spiritual gifts*—to cultivate, use, and expand them, even more than you ever have. You will change the world as you do so. You remember that last June, Sister Nelson and I spoke to the youth of the Church. We invited them to enlist in the Lord’s youth battalion to help gather Israel on both sides of the veil. This gathering is ‘*the greatest challenge, the greatest cause, and the greatest work on earth today*’!”¹⁹

It is a cause that desperately needs women, because women shape the future. So tonight, I’m extending a prophetic plea to you, the women of the Church, to shape the future by helping to gather scattered Israel.

My dear sisters, we need you! We need your strength, your conversion, your ability to lead, *your* wisdom, and *your* voice. “We simply cannot gather Israel without you”²⁰

Sisters, my dear friends, there is a work to do! May we each find ways to be involved in our communities and minister to the multitudes that surround us. Let us carry the corners we are called to lift. Let us make room for the one, and continue to wait for the Savior to come, and let us strive to show up at the ship and point others to the Savior. Our united faith and efforts will change our lives, and it will change the world.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹ Alburto, R, “We are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,” April 2022.

² Acts 10:38.

³ See John 6:5-14.

⁴ John 6:7.

⁵ John 6:8.

⁶ See John 6.

⁷ Mark 2:2-5.

⁸ John 20:19.

⁹ John 20:20.

¹⁰ John 20:24.

¹¹ John 20:25.

¹² John 20:28.

¹³ John 21:2-3.

¹⁴ Matthew 4:18-19.

¹⁵ See John 21:3.

¹⁶ John 21:4-7.

¹⁷ See John 21:7.

¹⁸ See John 21:7.

¹⁹ Russell M. Nelson, “Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel,” October 2018.

²⁰ Russell M. Nelson, “Sisters’ Participation in the Gathering of Israel,” October 2018.