

Come Unto Christ in Faith and in Humility – Every Day of Your Life for As Long as You Live

A Talk by Bruce Wilcox
February 25, 2024

Introduction

My dear brothers and sisters, my fellow students in the university of life, also known as the school of hard knocks. I appreciate the opportunity extended to me by the bishopric to address you. In the 15 minutes allotted to me, I would like to share a few words, directed most especially, to any within the sound of my voice, whether here or over the internet, who like myself, fall into the category of the remedial rather than advanced placement student. I speak to any who are like myself and are like the sleeping apostles, of whom Jesus said, “The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41) I speak to any who have and are acutely aware of their weaknesses.

I will be successful, if and only if, a few of you have an experience, as did Enos, where the words I speak “[sink] deep into [your] heart” (Enos 1:3) and a few others, after I am done, borrow words from the travelers on the road to Emaus saying “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us” (Luke 24:32). This can happen, not because I am special - I am not - but because, if I will speak words of truth, the Holy Ghost in His role as testator will attest to your spirit that these things are true. For as the prophet Moroni promised, “by

the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” (Moroni 10:5)

I ask for your prayers on my behalf, to the end that I might be able to maintain my composure, as I speak of things that are both precious and poignant to me.

Spiritual Beings

Brothers and sisters, you and I are spiritual beings having a human experience. At some point between conception and the time our mother felt us kicking in the womb, our spirit was placed into our body and we entered into what the book of Abraham calls this our “second estate” (Abraham 3:26).

While we have relatively few details concerning our “first estate”, our premortal existence, thanks to the revelations recorded in the books of Moses and Abraham, we have been given sufficient essential information to provide meaning and purpose to our life in the world in which we now live.

This essential information includes the truth that you and I are spiritual sons and daughters of the most Holy, Exalted, and Supreme Being in all the universe, God, Our Heavenly Father. Our Father shared with us that it is his work to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children (Moses 1:39) and that eternal life involves having a spirit clothed in a physical body to which it is inseparably connected (D&C 93:33) dwelling in a place of supreme glory.

To accomplish this purpose, the Lord caused this planet to be formed as a place where our spirits could receive a physical body (Abraham 3:24). He

indicated that the purpose of our life on earth is to prove ourselves, to see what we will do in the context of our earthly existence. He also shared that He was aware that during our life, we would make choices that would cause us to become unclean and experience what the scriptures call spiritual death. And so, in the premortal counsels, He announced that He would provide for us a Savior to provide the means by which we could overcome both physical and spiritual death. While some of our spirit siblings rebelled against God and did not proceed into the second estate, you and I were among those who enthusiastically “shouted for joy” in response to our Heavenly Father’s announced plan (Job 38:7).

Exactly how we transition to our second estate has not been revealed and whether the body our spirit enters into is determined by choice or by assignment is not known. I express it as my opinion that our spirit is placed into our body personally by our Heavenly Father. I also believe that we were not forced, but accepted our body and our parents of our own free will and choice.

I attended the birth of my two children, Christine and Brian. When I held them in my arms for the first time and gazed into their newborn eyes, it was evident to me that I was holding not an empty slate but a child already possessed with an intelligence, a disposition, a spirit that was uniquely theirs.

I love how the poet William Wordsworth expressed the idea when he said,

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,*

*But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:*

As human beings, spirits dwelling in a physical body, each of us is endowed with a sixth sense. Not the ability to see dead people, but the ability to receive communication from the spiritual realm to our spirits.

The Light of the World

The scriptures teach us that there is a light given to “every [person] that [comes] into the world” (D&C 84:46). The prophet Mormon referred to this light as the “light of Christ” and also the “Spirit of Christ”. He said “the Spirit of Christ is given to every [person], that [they] may know good from evil;” (Moroni 7:16)

If we do not extinguish it, this light will guide us throughout our lives. Our conscience is a manifestation of this light. How we respond to this light is at the core of the proving that mortality provides. As we respond favorably to the light, it will grow “brighter and brighter” (D&C 50:24)

As Mormon indicated, this influence, this light emanates from Christ. To the prophet Joseph Smith, Jesus stated it plainly, “I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;” (D&C 93:2)

Jesus is the Christ

In the meridian of time, as was promised by our Father in Heaven in the premortal counsels and, as prophesied by ancient prophets, Jesus Christ, came into the world.

He declared Himself to be the promised Savior. And He indicated to His followers that they could know with certainty that He was the Son of God by revelation from God. Peter, for example, was able to say “thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16) because God had revealed it to Him.

You and I can share in this knowledge by the same means, the Spirit of God communicating to our spirit that Jesus is the Christ.

Come Unto Christ

During His ministry, Jesus was chided by the Pharisees for associating with persons known to be sinners. To their accusations he replied, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” (Matthew 9:12)

Jesus is the physician of our souls to whom we can and must turn for spiritual healing.

The central message of His ministry is captured in this invitation recorded in chapter 11 of the book of Matthew, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29)

Notice His language. Come unto me... and I will give you rest. He does not say perhaps. He does not say, I’ll consider. He who in the words of the brother of Jared is a “God of truth and canst not lie” (Ether 3:12) says “Come unto me and I will give you rest.”

“Come unto me” was His invitation then and it remains in place today. And it is directed to every soul – including you, including me.

Jesus delivered what we know as the sermon on the mount in the eastern hemisphere during His mortal ministry and in the western hemisphere after His resurrection. The sermon begins with this invitation and promise, “blessed are the poor in spirit...

Let me stop here. To be poor in spirit is to find oneself in a place of spiritual poverty, to be lacking in spirituality-which President David O. McKay taught us has two dimensions. One He called victory over self, the idea that our spirit is master over our flesh and not the other way around. The second He labeled “communion with the infinite”, in other words, our relationship with Deity.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (3 Nephi 12:3) Jesus thus indicated that the kingdom of Heaven will be occupied by people who were at one point in their lives in a place of spiritual poverty but chose to come unto Him.

Coming unto Christ involves two phases.

First, like the prodigal son, we “come to ourselves”. We come to the awareness that we are not sufficient by ourselves. We become acutely aware of our weaknesses. We come to know that Frank Sinatra had it wrong. That there is no one who at the end of the days of their probation will be exulting for having done it “my way”. For as the earth is lower than the heavens, so are

our ways lower than God's ways. And our ways, the ways of the natural man, are insufficient and don't work.

The second phase involves coming to believe that Jesus Christ is real, that He lives today, that His promises to us are true and each day of our life, try to live accordingly.

Let us consider a few more of His words of invitation and promise – with a special focus on his words that apply to those of us who are weak in one way or another.

Those of us who have weakness have a favorite scripture. The scripture was recorded by Moroni as He was abridging the Book of Ether. He expressed to the Lord his concerns about readers of the record rejecting his words because of his weakness in writing on metal plates. The Lord lovingly assured him that the meek would overlook any defects in his writing.

The Lord went on to give this statement

“I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me;

for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me,

then will I make weak things become strong unto them.” (Ether 12:27)

As a software developer, the words “if” and “then” jump out at me whenever I see them in the scriptures, especially when spoken by the Lord.

The Lord promises, IF we “humble ourselves before” Him AND have faith in Him THEN He will make weak things become strong unto us.

Thus here are the things we should focus on – (1) humbling ourselves before Him and (2) having faith in Him.

Mutual Improvement Association

You see, the good news, the Gospel of Jesus, is not a self-improvement program. It is a mutual improvement association, not only with each other, but with the Son of God himself. It consists of an invitation, even the proverbial engraved invitation, engraved on the palms of His hands, to come unto Him, to humble ourselves, to have faith in Him, and from Him receive power to become better people.

In the sermon on the mount He said, “blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:6) In other words, if we are not yet fully righteous, but sincerely desire to become so, He will send the Holy Ghost to empower us and to sanctify us. You will recall that King Benjamin’s people experienced this and said “the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, ... has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.” (Mosiah 5:2)

By The Hand

The Savior made this promise to early members of the restored church. "Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers." (Doctrine and Covenants 112:10) I ask you to hark back to the time when you were a parent of a 4 year old child, a child completely able to walk and run but not yet wise enough to cross a busy street by themselves. As you go to cross you take your child by the hand with a firm grip that reflects your love and care for a child you love more than life itself and you safely conduct them to the other side. Now I ask you to change your perspective. You are the 4 year old child. And your Savior has offered to hold your hand and conduct you safely through the traffic of life.

He Stands at the Door

Through His beloved Apostle John, Jesus made this statement, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20) I testify that when we sweep away pride from our porch, when we dispel doubt from our doorway, when we furnish our front rooms with faith, He through the medium of His Spirit will enter into our homes, and as a welcome guest, abide with us.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, the day will come when every one of us will kneel and acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ. The day will come when every one of us will stand... stand before His judgment bar. And if we have repented of our

sins and endured to the end, it will be, in the words of the prophet Moroni, a pleasing bar. And once again we will hear his invitation to come unto Him. But this time his invitation will be this, "Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father." (Enos 1:27)

I bear my testimony that Jesus lives, that He is aware of each of us, that He is on our side and wants us succeed, that He loves each of us more than we can comprehend, and with arms wide open He calls to you and me to come unto Him. May we believe in Him and humbly come unto Him every day of our lives for as long as we live. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen