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“You Are My Hands”

As disciples of Jesus Christ, our Master, we are called to support and heal rather than condemn.

A story is told that during the bombing of a city in World War II, a large statue of Jesus Christ was severely damaged. When the townspeople found the statue among the rubble, they mourned because it had been a beloved symbol of their faith and of God’s presence in their lives.

Experts were able to repair most of the statue, but its hands had been damaged so severely that they could not be restored. Some suggested that they hire a sculptor to make new hands, but others wanted to leave it as it was—a permanent reminder of the tragedy of war. Ultimately, the statue remained without hands. However, the people of the city added on the base of the statue of Jesus Christ a sign with these words: “You are my hands.”

We Are the Hands of Christ

There is a profound lesson in this story. When I think of the Savior, I often picture Him with hands outstretched, reaching out to comfort, heal, bless, and love. And He always talked *with*, never *down to*, people. He loved the humble and the meek and walked among them, ministering to them and offering hope and salvation.

That is what He did during His

mortal life; it is what He would be doing if He were living among us today; and it is what we should be doing as His disciples and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

On this beautiful Easter morning, our thoughts and hearts are drawn to Him—the Hope of Israel and the Light of the World.

As we emulate His perfect example, our hands can become His hands; our eyes, His eyes; our heart, His heart.

Our Hands Can Embrace

I am deeply impressed by the way our Church members extend themselves to others. As we hear of your selfless sacrifice and overwhelming compassion, our hearts swell with

gratitude and happiness. You are a shining light to the world, and you are known for your goodness and compassion all around the globe.

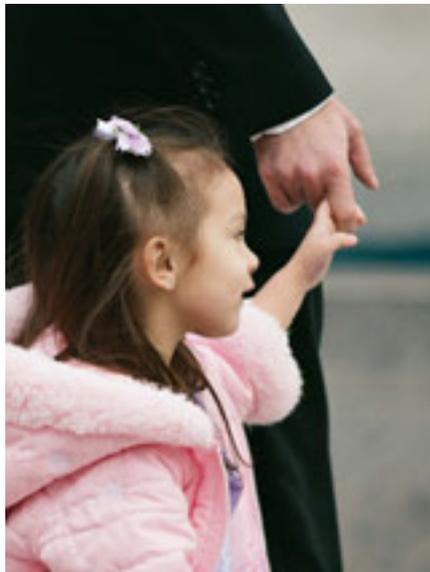
Unfortunately, from time to time we also hear of Church members who become discouraged and subsequently quit coming to and participating in our Church meetings because they think they don’t fit in.

When I was a young boy, during the aftermath of World War II, Germany was broken and in ruins. Many people were hungry, sick, and dying. I remember well the humanitarian shipments of food and clothing that came from the Church in Salt Lake City. To this day, I can still remember the smell of the clothing, and I can still taste the sweetness of the canned peaches.

There were some who joined the Church because of the goods they received at that time. Some members looked down on these new converts. They even called them an offensive name: *Büchsen Mormonen*, or “Canned-Food Mormons.” They resented these new members because they believed that once their temporal needs had been met, they would fall away.

While some did leave, many stayed—they came to church, tasted the sweetness of the gospel, and felt the tender embrace of caring brothers and sisters. They discovered “home.” And now, three and four generations later, many families trace their Church membership back to these converts.

I hope that we welcome and love all of God’s children, including those who might dress, look, speak, or just do things differently. It is not good to make others feel as though they are deficient. Let us lift those around us. Let us extend a welcoming hand. Let us bestow upon our brothers and sisters in the Church a special measure



of humanity, compassion, and charity so that they feel, at long last, they have finally found home.

When we are tempted to judge, let us think of the Savior, who “loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw *all* men unto him. . . .

“[And] he saith: Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, . . . [for] *all* men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden.”¹

As I read the scriptures, it appears that those who receive the Savior’s strongest reproach are often those who hold themselves in high esteem because of their wealth, influence, or perceived righteousness.

On one occasion the Savior taught a parable of two men who went into the temple to pray. One man, a respected Pharisee, prayed: “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”

The other man, a hated publican, stood “afar off, [and] would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”

And Jesus said, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.”²

In truth, we “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”³ We are all in need of mercy. In that last day when we are called to the judgment bar of God, do we not hope that our many imperfections will be forgiven? Do we not yearn to feel the Savior’s embrace?

It seems only right and proper that we extend to others that which we so earnestly desire for ourselves.

I am not suggesting that we accept sin or overlook evil, in our personal



life or in the world. Nevertheless, in our zeal, we sometimes confuse sin with sinner, and we condemn too quickly and with too little compassion. We know from modern revelation that “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.”⁴ We cannot gauge the worth of another soul any more than we can measure the span of the universe. Every person we meet is a VIP to our Heavenly Father. Once we understand that, we can begin to understand how we should treat our fellowmen.

One woman who had been through years of trial and sorrow said through her tears, “I have come to realize that I am like an old 20-dollar bill—crumpled, torn, dirty, abused, and scarred. But I am still a 20-dollar bill. I am worth something. Even though I may not

look like much and even though I have been battered and used, I am still worth the full 20 dollars.”

Our Hands Can Comfort

With this in mind, let our hearts and hands be stretched out in compassion toward others, for everyone is walking his or her own difficult path. As disciples of Jesus Christ, our Master, we are called to support and heal rather than condemn. We are commanded “to mourn with those that mourn” and “comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”⁵

It is unworthy of us as Christians to think that those who suffer deserve their suffering. Easter Sunday is a good day to remember that our Savior willingly took upon Himself the pain and sickness and suffering of us all—even



those of us who appear to deserve our suffering.⁶

In the book of Proverbs we read that “a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”⁷ Let us love at all times. And let us especially be there for our brothers and sisters during times of adversity.

Our Hands Can Serve

An old Jewish legend tells of two brothers, Abram and Zimri, who owned a field and worked it together. They agreed to divide both the labor and the harvest equally. One night as the harvest came to a close, Zimri could not sleep, for it didn’t seem

right that Abram, who had a wife and seven sons to feed, should receive only half of the harvest, while he, with only himself to support, had so much.

So Zimri dressed and quietly went into the field, where he took a third of his harvest and put it in his brother’s pile. He then returned to his bed, satisfied that he had done the right thing.

Meanwhile, Abram could not sleep either. He thought of his poor brother, Zimri, who was all alone and had no sons to help him with the work. It did not seem right that Zimri, who worked so hard by himself, should get only half of the harvest. Surely this was not pleasing to God. And so Abram quietly went to the fields, where he took a third of his harvest and placed it in the pile of his beloved brother.

The next morning, the brothers went to the field and were both astonished that the piles still looked to be the same size. That night both brothers slipped out of their houses to repeat their efforts of the previous night. But this time they discovered each other, and when they did, they wept and embraced. Neither could speak, for their hearts were overcome with love and gratitude.⁸

This is the spirit of compassion: that we love others as ourselves,⁹ seek their happiness, and do unto them as we hope they would do unto us.¹⁰

True Love Requires Action

True love requires action. We can speak of love all day long—we can write notes or poems that proclaim it, sing songs that praise it, and preach sermons that encourage it—but until we manifest that love in action, our words are nothing but “sounding

brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”¹¹

Christ did not just speak about love; He showed it each day of His life. He did not remove Himself from the crowd. Being amidst the people, Jesus reached out to the one. He rescued the lost. He didn’t just teach a class about reaching out in love and then delegate the actual work to others. He not only taught but also showed us how to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees.”¹²

Christ knows how to minister to others perfectly. When the Savior stretches out His hands, those He touches are uplifted and become greater, stronger, and better people as a result.

If we are His hands, should we not do the same?

We Can Love as He Does

The Savior revealed the perfect priorities for our lives, our homes, our wards, our communities, and our nations when He spoke of love as the great commandment upon which “hang all the law and the prophets.”¹³ We can spend our days obsessing about the finest details of life, the law, and long lists of things to do; but should we neglect the great commandments, we are missing the point and we are clouds without water, drifting in the winds, and trees without fruit.¹⁴

Without this love for God the Father and our fellowmen we are only the form of His Church—without the substance. What good is our teaching without love? What good is missionary, temple, or welfare work without love?

Love is what inspired our Heavenly Father to create our spirits; it is what led our Savior to the Garden of Gethsemane to make Himself a

ransom for our sins. Love is the grand motive of the plan of salvation; it is the source of happiness, the ever-renewing spring of healing, the precious fountain of hope.

As we extend our hands and hearts toward others in Christlike love, something wonderful happens to us. Our own spirits become healed, more refined, and stronger. We become happier, more peaceful, and more receptive to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit.

With all my heart and soul I give thanks to our Heavenly Father for His love for us, for the gift of His Son, for the life and example of Jesus the Christ, and for His sinless and selfless sacrifice. I rejoice in the fact that Christ is not dead but risen from the grave! He lives and has returned to the earth to restore His authority and gospel to man. He has given us the perfect example of the kind of men and women we should be.

On this Easter Sunday, and every day, as we contemplate with reverence and awe how our Savior embraces us, comforts us, and heals us, let us commit to become His hands, that others through us may feel His loving embrace. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 26:24–25, 28; emphasis added.
2. See Luke 18:9–14.
3. Romans 3:23.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 18:10.
5. Mosiah 18:9.
6. See Alma 7:11–13; Doctrine and Covenants 19:16.
7. Proverbs 17:17.
8. See Clarence Cook, “Abram and Zimri,” in *Poems by Clarence Cook* (1902), 6–9.
9. See Matthew 22:39.
10. See Matthew 7:12.
11. 1 Corinthians 13:1.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
13. Matthew 22:40.
14. See Jude 1:12.