shoud prepare to serve a mission. Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much. Young men, I admonish you to prepare for service as a missionary. Keep yourselves clean and pure and worthy to represent the Lord. Maintain your health and strength. Study the scriptures. Where such is available, participate in seminary or institute. Familiarize yourself with the missionary handbook Preach My Gospel.

A word to you young sisters: while you do not have the same priesthood responsibility as do the young men to serve as full-time missionaries, you also make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome your service.

And now to you mature brothers and sisters: we need many, many more senior couples. To the faithful couples now serving or who have served in the past, we thank you for your faith and devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You serve willingly and well and accomplish great good.

To those of you who are not yet to the season of life when you might serve a couples mission, I urge you to prepare now for the day when you and your spouse might do so. As your circumstances allow, as you are eligible for retirement, and as your health permits, make yourselves available to leave home and give full-time missionary service. There are few times in your lives when you will enjoy the sweet spirit and satisfaction that come from giving full-time service together in the work of the Master.

Now, my brothers and sisters, may you be attuned to the Spirit of the Lord as we hear from His servants during the next two days. That this may be the blessing of each, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Because of Your Faith

My thanks to all you wonderful members of the Church . . . for proving every day of your life that the pure love of Christ “never faileth.”

President Monson, the entire world-wide membership of this church joins in that great anthem with this wonderful choir, and we say, “We thank thee, O God, for a prophet.” Thank you for your life, for your example, and for that welcoming message to another general conference of the Church.

We love you, we admire you, and we sustain you. Indeed, in this afternoon’s session we will have a more formal opportunity to raise our hands in a sustaining vote, not only for President Monson but also for all the other general officers of the Church as well. Because my name will be included on that list, may I be so bold as to speak for all in thanking you in advance for those uplifted hands. Not one of us could serve without your prayers and without your support. Your loyalty and your love mean more to us than we can ever possibly say.

In that spirit my message today is to say that we sustain you, that we return to you those same heartfelt prayers and that same expression of love. We all know there are special keys, covenants, and responsibilities given to the presiding officers of the Church, but we also know that the Church draws incomparable strength, a truly unique vitality, from the faith and devotion of every member of this church, whoever you may be. In whatever country you live, however young or inadequate you feel, or however aged or limited you see yourself as being, I testify you are individually loved of God, you are central to the meaning of His work, and you are cherished and prayed for by the presiding officers of His Church. The personal value, the sacred splendor of every one of you, is the very reason there is a plan for salvation and exaltation. Contrary to the parlance of the day, this is about you. No, don’t turn and look at your neighbor. I am talking to you!

I have struggled to find an adequate way to tell you how loved of God you are and how grateful we on this stand are for you. I am trying to be voice for the very angels of heaven in thanking you for every good thing you have ever done, for every kind word you have ever said, for every sacrifice you have ever made in extending to someone—to anyone—the beauty and blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am grateful for Young Women leaders who go to girls camp and, without shampoo, showers, or mascara, turn smoky, campfire testimony meetings into some of the most
riveting spiritual experiences those girls—or those leaders—will experience in their lifetime. I am grateful for all the women of the Church who in my life have been as strong as Mount Sinai and as compassionate as the Mount of Beatitudes. We smile sometimes about our sisters’ stories—you know, green Jell-O, quilts, and funeral potatoes. But my family has been the grateful recipient of each of those items at one time or another—and in one case, the quilt and the funeral potatoes on the same day. It was just a small quilt—tiny, really—to make my deceased baby brother’s journey back to his heavenly home as warm and comfortable as our Relief Society sisters wanted him to be. The food provided for our family after the service, voluntarily given without a single word from us, was gratefully received. Smile, if you will, about our traditions, but somehow the too-often unheralded women in this church are always there when hands hang down and knees are feeble. They seem to grasp instinctively the divinity in Christ’s declaration: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . , ye have done it unto me.”

And no less the brethren of the priesthood. I think, for example, of the leaders of our young men who, depending on the climate and continent, either take bone-rattling 50-mile (80 km) hikes or dig—and actually try to sleep in—ice caves for what have to be the longest nights of human experience. I am grateful for memories of my own high priests group, which a few years ago took turns for weeks sleeping on a small recliner in the bedroom of a dying quorum member so that his aged and equally fragile wife could get some sleep through those final weeks of her sweetheart’s life. I am grateful for the Church’s army of teachers, officers, advisers, and clerks, to say nothing of people who are forever setting up tables and taking down chairs. I am grateful for ordained patriarchs, musicians, family historians, and osteoporotic couples who trundle off to the temple at 5:00 in the morning with little suitcases now almost bigger than they are. I am grateful for selfless parents who—perhaps for a lifetime—care for a challenged child, sometimes with more than one challenge and sometimes with more than one child. I am grateful for children who close ranks later in life to give back to ill or aging parents.

And to the near-perfect elderly sister who almost apologetically whispered recently, “I have never been a leader of anything in the Church. I guess I’ve only been a helper,” I say, “Dear sister, God bless you and all the ‘helpers’ in the kingdom.” Some of us who are leaders hope someday to have the standing before God that you have already attained.

Too often I have failed to express gratitude for the faith and goodness of such people in my life. President James E. Faust stood at this pulpit 13 years ago and said, “As a small boy . . . , I remember my grandmother . . . cooking our delicious meals on a hot woodstove. When the wood box next to the stove became empty, Grandmother would silently . . . go out to refill it from the pile of cedar wood outside, and bring the heavily laden box back into the house. I was
home in St. George, so it's not too late to thank her. To you, Mom and Dad, and to all the moms and dads and families and faithful people everywhere, I thank you for sacrificing for your children (and for other people's children!), for wanting so much to give them advantages you never had, for wanting so much to give them the happiest life you could provide.

My thanks to all you wonderful members of the Church—and legions of good people not of our faith—for proving every day of your life that the pure love of Christ “never faileth.”

No one of you is insignificant, in part because you make the gospel of Jesus Christ what it is—a living reminder of His grace and mercy, a private but powerful manifestation in small villages and large cities of the good He did and the life He gave bringing peace and salvation to other people. We are honored beyond expression to be counted one with you in such a sacred cause.

As Jesus said to the Nephites, so say I today:

“Because of your faith . . . , my joy is full.

“And when he had said these words, he wept.”

Brothers and sisters, seeing your example, I pledge anew my determination to be better, to be more faithful—more kind and devoted, more charitable and true as our Father in Heaven is and as so many of you already are. This I pray in the name of our Great Exemplar in all things—even the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—amen.

NOTES

1. See Hebrews 12:12; Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.


4. 1 Corinthians 13:8; see also Moroni 7:46–47.

5. 3 Nephi 17:20–21.