

By Elder
Patrick Kearon
Of the Seventy



Come, LET US ADORE HIM

Last Christmas while serving at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, I encountered a local weather condition called an inversion. An inversion is a condition in which the air close to the ground is cooler than the air higher up, the opposite—the inversion—of the usual condition. Inversions are not unique to Salt Lake City, but they are more pronounced in effect because the city is located in a valley bounded by high mountains. This traps the city smog and holds it against the valley floor, covering the city and surrounding area in a thick, dark, freezing cloud. The smog is hazardous to the health of those with breathing difficulties and affects the morale of many others, as the air feels dirty and the sun is obliterated for days, even weeks, at a time.

A short drive up the mountains, however, reveals that the smog is only a few hundred feet thick. In a few minutes, you can be in bright sunshine, breathing crystal clear air, staring at pristine, snowcapped mountains. The contrast with the valley below could not be starker. As you climb farther up the mountains, you look down on the smog you have left behind in the valley, and it appears like a dirty blanket beneath an azure sky.

We must recognize that we have the power and capacity to take ourselves out of the filthy air of the valley and into the bright sunlight of the peace and hope that is found only by coming to the Savior.



There are times in our lives when we figuratively find ourselves stuck down in the valley, under the gloom of the dark, smoggy haze. Because of poor choices we have made, behaviors that offend the Spirit, or simply the painful and stretching decisions and challenges common to mortal life, we feel mired in thick, smothering fog. We can't see clearly, we feel confused, and we sense that we have moved ourselves away from the light and warmth of our Heavenly Father's love. We forget that the pure light of the Lord awaits us, beckons us, and is only a few steps of faith away. We must recognize that we have the power and capacity to take ourselves out of the filthy air of the valley and into the bright sunlight of the peace and hope that is found only by coming to the Savior.

At this Christmas time of year, we rejoice in the birth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, who has invited us all to come unto Him and into the light. We can read in the scriptures of the men and women who were blessed to literally come to Him at the time of the Nativity. Some came from afar, while others were closer by. Some received angelic visitations, and others acted on personal revelation. But each accepted the invitation to come to Him.



What can we learn from the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and the Wise Men, all of whom were favored to come and see the Christ child with their own eyes? As we ponder their faithful responses to the invitation to come to Christ, we can learn to more effectively lift ourselves out of our own inversions, out of any gloom and confusion we may be experiencing, and bring ourselves into the clear, pure hope offered by the Light of the World. It is there, with Him, that we come to feel who we really are and where we fit into the eter-

nal picture. Our own inversions are reversed, and proper perspective is restored.

Our discipleship doesn't require us to leave our sheep in the fields or to cross deserts. Our journey to the Savior isn't physical; it is spiritual and behavioral. It involves accepting and embracing His Atonement.

The Shepherds

In the well-known verses from Luke 2, we learn significant facts about those first witnesses of Christ's birth, the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. When "the angel of the Lord came upon them, . . . they were sore afraid" (verse 9). But they heard "good tidings of great joy" that the long-foretold Savior, the Messiah, the Christ, had been born (verse 10). They listened to know the sign by which they could recognize the Savior, that He would be "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (verse 12). When the heavenly host had concluded their joyful proclamation, the shepherds responded immediately, saying, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass" (verse 15). They came "with haste" (verse 16) and found the Christ

child just as the angel had said, and then they “returned, glorifying and praising God” (verse 20). Wanting to share the glorious news of the Savior’s birth, “they made [it] known abroad” (verse 17).

Like the shepherds, we must respond immediately, with haste, whenever the Spirit speaks to us. In the words of President Thomas S. Monson, we must “never, never, never postpone following a prompting.”¹ Sometimes after heeding a prompting, we cannot clearly see why we have been guided by the Spirit to act in a certain way. But often, like the shepherds, we see miracles occur, and our faithful response to a prompting is confirmed. We can then take opportunities to share our joy and our witness with others. Doing so can strengthen others’ faith and hope, further confirming our own testimonies and bringing us closer to the Savior and His ways.

Simeon

Another favored witness of the Christ child was Simeon. He was a “just and devout” man who received regular communication from the Holy Ghost (Luke 2:25). It had been revealed to him “that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (verse 26), and he was living in hope and anticipation of that blessed event. The Spirit prompted him to come to the temple on the day Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to Jerusalem “to present him to the Lord” (verse 22). Simeon recognized the baby as the promised Messiah and “took he him up in his arms, and blessed God” (verse 28), prophesying of the destiny of the holy baby as the “light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (verse 32).

Simeon’s righteous and faithful life enabled him to be present in the temple so he could testify of the Light when at last he found it. We, like Simeon, can strive for greater sensitivity and obedience to the whisperings of the Holy Ghost so that our lives can take the path our Heavenly Father has in mind for us. Because Simeon had cultivated his ability to hear and respond to the Spirit, he was in the right place at the right time, and the Lord’s promises to him were fulfilled in the most glorious way.

The same opportunities can be afforded to each of us and can likewise allow the Lord’s plan to unfold in our lives. When we are faced with making decisions of eternal significance, when we are at a crossroads in our lives, we need clarity of thinking and correct perspective. Sometimes the very nature of making these important decisions causes us to feel unsure, unsteady, and even unable to act, down in the dark valley under the inversion. But as we take steps of faith and act according to righteous principles, we gradually see God’s plan taking shape in our lives, and we are brought back into the bright sunlight of God’s love.

Anna

Anna was a woman of “great age,” a widow described as a “prophetess” (Luke 2:36), whose long and faithful life was characterized by her constancy in fasting and prayer and that she “departed not from the temple” (verse 37). Upon beholding the baby Jesus in the temple, she “gave thanks” for the Christ child “and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (verse 38).

We learn from Anna’s experience that we can live faithfully through all weathers if we



ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS, BY DEL PARSON; SIMEON'S PRAYER OF THANKS, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT; THE SUBSTANCE OF HOPE, MAY NOT BE COPIED; THE ARRIVAL, BY MICHAEL ALBRECHTSEN, MAY NOT BE COPIED



are consistent in our fasting and prayer and if we do not depart from the temple in our hearts. If we haven't yet had the opportunity to travel to a temple and receive its blessings, we can still enjoy the blessings that flow into our lives when we worthily hold a temple recommend. Prophets have repeatedly invited us to hold a temple recommend even if our circumstances do not allow us to attend the temple.² We can lift ourselves from dark moments and into the light of gratitude



As we ponder the faithful responses of the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and the Wise Men, we can learn to more effectively lift ourselves out of our own inversions, out of gloom and confusion, and bring ourselves to the Light of the World.

through our temple worship and through testifying of Jesus to all who look for peace and hope.

The Wise Men

Finally, in Matthew 2 we read of the Wise Men, who journeyed far, having “seen his star in the east” and having understood the sign (verse 2). Prepared with gifts of tribute and worship, they came looking for Him, asking, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” (verse 2). When their search was finally over and they had found the Christ child, they “fell down, and worshipped him” and presented their treasures (verse 11). Though they met with Herod's deceit, they were “warned of God in a dream that they should not return

to Herod” but should go home “another way” (verse 12). The Wise Men acted on this revelation from God and protected the holy family from Herod's evil intentions.

There is much we can learn from the Wise Men. Like them, we should study the scriptures and know the signs to watch for as we all prepare the earth for the Savior's Second Coming. Then, as we search and ponder the scriptures, we will more fully desire to seek the Lord every day of our lives and, as a gift to Him, give up our selfishness, pride, and rebelliousness. When personal revelation comes to alter the plans we have made, we can obey, having faith and trust that God knows what is best for us. And ultimately, through lives of true discipleship, we must fall down and worship the Savior in humility and love.

This discipleship doesn't necessarily require us to leave our sheep in the fields or to cross deserts. Our journey to Him isn't physical; it is spiritual and behavioral. It involves accepting and embracing the fact that His Atonement is infinite and covers every aspect of our lives—our sin, weakness, pain, sickness, and infirmity (see Alma 7:11–13). It means that we can let go of those things that hold us down in the gloomy fog of our own inversion and live instead in the warmth and love of the Light of the World. As President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has taught: “The words ‘come unto Christ’ are an invitation. It is the most important invitation you could ever offer to another person. It is the most important invitation anyone could accept.”³ ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “The Spirit Giveth Life,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 70.
2. See, for example, Howard W. Hunter, “The Great Symbol of Our Membership,” *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 6; *Ensign*, Oct. 1994, 6.
3. Henry B. Eyring, “Come unto Christ,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Mar. 2008, 49.

