
A 12-Year-Old Deacon

ELDER JOHN M. MADSEN

Of the Seventy

Each one of us, as sons of God, can fulfill our mission and destiny.



My beloved brethren of the priesthood, as I begin, I would like to direct my remarks to each 12-year-old deacon attending this general priesthood session. Wherever you are, I want to acknowledge your presence and to tell or remind you of the experience that President Gordon B. Hinckley had when he was, like you are, a 12-year-old deacon.

From his biography we read: “Not long after he was ordained a deacon, he attended his first stake priesthood meeting with his father. . . . He felt a little out of place as he found a seat on the back row of the Tenth Ward chapel while [his father] (who was

serving in the stake presidency) took his place on the stand. To open the meeting, the three or four hundred men present stood and sang William W. Phelps’s triumphant anthem . . . : ‘Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah! / Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer. / Blessed to open the last dispensation, / Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.’”

Reflecting back on that experience, President Hinckley said: “Something happened within me as I heard those men of faith sing. It touched my heart. It gave me a feeling that was difficult to describe. I felt a great moving power, both emotional and spiritual. I had never had it previously in terms of any Church experience. There came into my heart a conviction that the man of whom they sang was really a prophet of God. I knew then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God.”¹

Even as that experience had by President Hinckley as a 12-year-old deacon was “one he would remember for the rest of his life,”² I pray that the experience you are having will be one you will remember for the rest of your lives.

Now, I invite us all to look at this remarkable cast bronze sculpture entitled *Deacons’ Bench*. For those of



you who cannot see it, *Deacons' Bench* is the likeness of five deacons, caught in a candid moment while seated on a bench in church.

As you look at these five deacons, what do you see? Now, as I read statements by two former Presidents of the Church, I will ask the question a little differently: what *can* you see?

President Joseph Fielding Smith declared: "Our young people . . . are the nobility of heaven, a choice and chosen generation who have a divine destiny. Their spirits have been reserved to come forth in this day when the gospel is on the earth, and when the Lord needs valiant servants to carry on his great latter-day work."³

President Spencer W. Kimball

declared, "We are rearing a royal generation . . . who have special things to do."⁴

In light of these prophetic declarations, if we expand our vision beyond five deacons on a bench to include all of the young men of the Aaronic Priesthood, then what can you see?

I trust and pray that we can all see their divine potential; that we can see them going forth as bearers of the holy priesthood and as missionaries preaching "the everlasting gospel"⁵ by the Spirit⁶ "to the nations of the earth";⁷ that we can see them as faithful husbands and fathers and as valiant servants in and leaders of the Church and kingdom of God in these latter days.

In order for us to more clearly envision the divine destiny of this chosen and royal generation, we need only to reflect upon the 12-year-old Jesus, who went up to Jerusalem with His parents to celebrate the Feast of the Passover.⁸

Who was this 12-year-old boy? What was His mission and destiny? And how was He able to fulfill it?

We proclaim and the scriptures confirm that He was and is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God;⁹ that He "came into the world . . . to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness"¹⁰ "that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name";¹¹ that as a youth He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man";¹² that He "grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come";¹³ and that He "was in all points tempted like as we are."¹⁴ Indeed, He faced "temptations of every kind"¹⁵ but "gave no heed unto them."¹⁶ And when confronted by Lucifer, "the father of all lies,"¹⁷ "the author of all sin,"¹⁸ Jesus was protected not only by His knowledge of the scriptures but also by His absolute obedience to the word and will of His Father,¹⁹ and He commanded, saying, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."²⁰

Now, as to how He was able to fulfill His mission and destiny, consider these words of Jesus, who said:

"When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

"And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."²¹

That each one of us, as sons of God,²² can fulfill our mission and destiny is made plain by these words of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments . . . may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness.”²³

I so testify, as I also bear my witness that President Thomas S. Monson is indeed a prophet of God and that he and his counselors in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are prophets, seers, and revelators, in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. In Sheri Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1996), 35–36.
2. In “President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *In Memoriam: President Gordon B. Hinckley, 1910–2008* (a supplement to the *Liabona*, Apr. 2008, 3; a supplement to the *Ensign*, Mar. 2008, 3).
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 6.
4. “Boys Need Heroes Close By,” *Ensign*, May 1976, 45.
5. Revelation 14:6; D&C 68:1; see also D&C 133:7–8.
6. See Matthew 10:19–20; Luke 24:32; D&C 42:14; 43:15; 50:13–22; 84:85.
7. D&C 134:12; see also Revelation 14:6; D&C 68:8; 133:7–8.
8. See Luke 2:41–42.
9. See Matthew 16:16; 2 Nephi 25:19–20; Mosiah 3:8; 4:2; Alma 5:48; Helaman 5:9; 3 Nephi 5:13; 11:10–11; 20:31; D&C 14:9; 68:6.
10. D&C 76:41.
11. Mosiah 3:9; see also Mosiah 3:12; D&C 18:17–19, 21–25.
12. Luke 2:52.
13. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:24.
14. Hebrews 4:15.
15. Alma 7:11.
16. D&C 20:22.
17. 2 Nephi 2:18; Ether 8:25; Moses 4:4.
18. Helaman 6:30; see also Mosiah 4:14.
19. See Matthew 4:1–10.
20. Matthew 4:10.
21. John 8:28–29.
22. Psalm 82:6; Hosea 1:10; Romans 8:16–17; Hebrews 12:9; D&C 11:30; 35:2; Moses 6:68.
23. D&C 93:1, 19; see also John 14:6; D&C 76:92–95; 2 Nephi 31:7–16; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27; Moroni 10:32–33.