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PREPARING
A PLACE FOR THE
LORD

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Last year just before Christmas, I attended a dinner given in honor of a high-ranking French official who is not a member of the Church. The dinner was held in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Before sitting down to our meal, we took our guest to the observation window on the 10th floor, which offers visitors a beautiful view of Temple Square. The scene was almost magical, with the Salt Lake Temple standing tall amid myriad glittering lights. We stood there for several minutes, almost speechless.

Upon our return to the banquet room, the official asked us an unexpected question: “Do you believe in the end of the world?” This led to an inspiring discussion about the Lord’s Second Coming and the importance for all of us to be prepared to receive Him on the day of His return.

As I was thinking about the temple we had just admired, a wonderful thought came to my mind: “Upon His return, Jesus will *at last* have a beautiful place in which to dwell!”

The Guide to the Scriptures notes that a temple is “*literally* the house of the Lord.”¹ In other words, it is not just a symbolic place. The temples of our dispensation are prepared and consecrated houses where He may physically come. The Lord said that His Church should be established so “that my covenant people may be gathered in one in that day *when I shall come to my temple*” (D&C 42:36; emphasis added).

What a striking contrast with the Savior’s humble beginnings in mortality. He, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, was born in a simple stable and laid in a manger “because there was no room . . . in the inn” (Luke 2:7). During His early childhood, Jesus did not always enjoy the comforts of a permanent home, such as when His family fled to Egypt to escape the cruelty of a tyrant (see Matthew 2:13–14).

We don’t know the details of His family’s sojourn in Egypt, but likely He and His parents lived the strenuous life of refugees—a life comparable to that of the many migrants in our time who have fled theaters of war and civil conflict in Africa and the Middle East.



Even during His adult life, Jesus indicated that He did not have a regular home. One day a man approached Him and said, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” The Savior answered, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:57, 58).

My brothers and sisters, each time I hear the story of the Savior’s birth and earthly ministry, I think of our personal responsibility to prepare welcoming places for Him for the day He returns. What can we do?

Go to the Temple

First, let us be prepared to receive Him in His own house—the temple. Who among us has not dreamed of visiting the places where the Savior was born, lived, and carried out His earthly ministry? Many, with considerable sacrifice, have journeyed to the Holy Land. But how important it is that we visit the places to which He might one day return. One of the best ways we, as His disciples, can prepare for His Second Coming is to go regularly to His holy house and bind ourselves to Him through sacred covenants.

Prepare Your Home

Second, we can make our homes places where the Lord would want to stay. In the scriptures, we read numerous accounts of kindly people who welcomed and hosted the Savior in their homes. So let us ask ourselves these questions: Is my home acceptable to the Lord? Is it a safe, peaceful, and Spirit-filled place where He would feel comfortable? Our homes need not be spacious or luxurious. A humble dwelling, centered on the gospel and filled with caring family and friends, would make Him happy.

Gather the Elect

Third, we can help gather His elect from all over the world—even if that means leaving our homes for a time to help build His earthly kingdom. The history of the people of God is a history of Saints who were always ready and willing to go where the Lord wanted them to go. I think of

the prophets of old, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Lehi, and many others. I think of the Lord’s Apostles in the meridian of time who relentlessly spread the gospel across the Mediterranean.

Latter-day prophets and apostles, along with thousands of missionaries, have taken and are continuing to take the message of Christ to the four corners of the earth. They are willing to leave the comforts of their homes to offer their service in the Lord’s vineyard.

Help Those in Need

Finally, a wonderful way to prepare a place for the Lord is to help our neighbors who don’t have a home. The early days of the Restoration included times when the Saints were without shelter. In their quest for Zion, the intolerance and wickedness of their enemies often forced them to leave their homes.

President Brigham Young (1801–77) used these touching words to describe their plight: “We have, time and again, and again, been driven from our peaceful homes, and our women and children been obliged to exist on the prairies, in the forests, on the roads, and in tents, in the dead of winter, suffering all manner of hardships, even to death itself.”²

One of the most moving episodes from this era highlights the small village of Quincy, Illinois, during the winter of 1839. At that time, this community of settlers and farmers, situated on the bank of the Mississippi River, included about 1,500 souls living in precarious conditions. In the middle of a harsh winter, they suddenly faced the arrival of approximately 5,000 Church members fleeing the extermination order issued by the governor of Missouri. The Saints were in a state of utter destitution and distress, having crossed the frozen waters of the Mississippi on foot. With incredible generosity, the citizens of Quincy welcomed them with open arms, opening their homes and sharing their meager provisions.

One resident of Quincy described the arrival of these refugees: “Many of the Saints were glad to find shelter in my house from the storms, until they could find a place



to live in. Very many nights the floors, upstairs and down, were covered with beds so closely it was impossible to set a foot anywhere without stepping on a bed.”³

For those of us who are blessed to live in more calm and prosperous circumstances, these accounts have great significance. They teach us to be a people always prepared to reach out to the homeless and the destitute. Regardless of whether we live in areas experiencing a great influx of refugees or in small, isolated communities, there are many ways we can serve those who struggle to have the bare necessities of life. We can contribute to the Church’s humanitarian fund. We can work with others in our communities who provide loving service to those in need. We can extend our friendship to those who have been displaced when they come into our communities. We can genuinely welcome the strangers who visit our wards and branches.

One of our most beautiful hymns recounts the story of a stranger who found sanctuary with a man of great charity.

*’Twas night; the floods were out; it blew
A winter hurricane aloof.
I heard his voice abroad and flew
To bid him welcome to my roof.*

*I warmed and clothed and cheered my guest
And laid him on my couch to rest;
Then made the earth my bed, and seemed
In Eden’s garden while I dreamed. . . .*

*Then in a moment to my view
The stranger started from disguise.
The tokens in his hands I knew;
The Savior stood before mine eyes.
He spake, and my poor name he named,
“Of me thou hast not been ashamed.
These deeds shall thy memorial be;
Fear not, thou didst them unto me.”⁴*

I am proud to belong to a Church that never ceases to reach out to the poor and needy of the earth. I am humbled by the countless acts of love and charity, small and great, performed each day by the Church and its members. These acts will always be an essential part of the mission of the Church because it is the Church of Jesus Christ and we strive to follow His example.

Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that He was born in the meridian of time, that He lives, and that one day He will return in glory to rule and reign over His earthly kingdom.

By way of preparation, I invite you to go more often to His holy house; create a safe, loving, and peaceful environment in your home; and participate in gathering His elect from the four corners of the earth. I also pray that you will feel a special desire to reach out in love to those among us who are homeless and destitute. In doing so, you will prepare a place in your heart and home to welcome the Savior, and His return truly will be a great and marvelous day. ■

NOTES

1. Guide to the Scriptures, “Temple”; emphasis added.
2. Brigham Young, in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:509.
3. Wandle Mace, in Ora H. Barlow, *The Israel Barlow Story and Mormon Mores* (1968), 156; see also 154–55.
4. “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” *Hymns*, no. 29.