

“How often do we think of the Savior? How deeply and how gratefully and how adoringly do we reflect on his life? How central to our lives do we know him to be?”



Jesus Christ—Our Only Way to Hope and Joy

“If our lives and our faith are centered upon Jesus Christ and his restored gospel, nothing can ever go permanently wrong.”

From the Life of Howard W. Hunter

A prominent theme in President Howard W. Hunter’s teachings is that true peace, healing, and happiness come only as a person strives to know and follow Jesus Christ. President Hunter taught that “Christ’s way is not only the *right* way, but ultimately the *only* way to hope and joy.”¹

President Hunter was likewise bold in testifying of the Savior’s divine mission. “As an ordained Apostle and special witness of Christ, I give to you my solemn witness that Jesus Christ is in fact the Son of God,” he declared. “He is the Messiah prophetically anticipated by Old Testament prophets. He is the Hope of Israel, for whose coming the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had prayed during the long centuries of prescribed worship. . . .

“It is by the power of the Holy Ghost that I bear my witness. I know of Christ’s reality as if I had seen with my eyes and heard with my ears. I know also that the Holy Spirit will confirm the truthfulness of my witness in the hearts of all those who listen with an ear of faith.”²

Feeling drawn to the places where Jesus ministered, President Hunter traveled to the Holy Land more than two dozen times. Elder James E. Faust of the Quorum of the Twelve said that “Jerusalem was like a magnet to him. . . . His desire to be where the Savior walked and taught seemed insatiable. He loved all the sights and the sounds. He especially loved the Galilee. But he loved one place

most of all. He would *always* say, ‘Let’s go to the Garden Tomb just once more, for old time’s sake.’ There he would sit and meditate as though he were piercing the veil between himself and the Savior.”³

Teachings of Howard W. Hunter

We must know Christ better than we know Him and remember Him more often than we remember Him.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sing reverently:

*Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest. . . .*

. . . How often do we think of the Savior? How deeply and how gratefully and how adoringly do we reflect on his life? How central to our lives do we know him to be?

For example, how much of a normal day, a working week, or a fleeting month is devoted to “Jesus, the very thought of thee”? Perhaps for some of us, not enough.

Surely life would be more peaceful, surely marriages and families would be stronger, certainly neighborhoods and nations would be safer and kinder and more constructive if more of the gospel of Jesus Christ “with sweetness” could fill our breasts.

Unless we pay more attention to the thoughts of our hearts, I wonder what hope we have to claim that greater joy, that sweeter prize: someday his loving “face to see / And in [his] presence rest.”

Every day of our lives and in every season of the year . . . , Jesus asks each of us, as he did following his triumphant entry into Jerusalem those many years ago, “What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?” (Matt. 22:42.)

We declare that he is the Son of God, and the reality of that fact should stir our souls more frequently.⁴



*“May we be more devoted and disciplined followers of Christ.
May we cherish him in our thoughts and speak his name with love.”*

We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him. Then we will drink water springing up unto eternal life and will eat the bread of life.⁵



Jesus is our only true source of hope and lasting joy.

*O hope of ev'ry contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
To those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek!*

What a lovely verse of music, and what a message of hope anchored in the gospel of Christ! Is there one among us, in any walk of life, who does not need hope and seek for greater joy? These are the universal needs and longings of the human soul, and they are the promises of Christ to his followers. Hope is extended to “ev'ry contrite heart” and joy comes to “all the meek.”

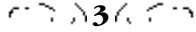
Contrition is costly—it costs us our pride and our insensitivity, but it especially costs us our sins. For, as King Lamoni’s father knew twenty centuries ago, this is the price of true hope. “O God,” he cried, “wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee . . . that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day.” (Alma 22:18.) When we, too, are willing to give away all our sins to know him and follow him, we, too, will be filled with the joy of eternal life.

And what of the meek? In a world too preoccupied with winning through intimidation and seeking to be number one, no large crowd of folk is standing in line to buy books that call for mere meekness. But the meek shall inherit the earth, a pretty impressive corporate takeover—and done *without* intimidation! Sooner or later, and we pray sooner *than* later, everyone will acknowledge that Christ’s way is not only the *right* way, but ultimately the *only* way to hope and joy. Every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that gentleness is better than brutality, that kindness is greater than coercion, that the soft voice turneth away wrath. In the end, and sooner than that whenever possible, we must be more like him. . . .

*Jesus, our only joy be thou,
As thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be thou our glory now,
And thru eternity.*

That is my personal prayer and my wish for all the world. . . . I testify that Jesus is the only true source of lasting joy, that our only lasting peace is in him. I do wish him to be “our glory now,” the glory each of us yearns for individually and the only prize men and nations can permanently hold dear. He is our prize in time and in eternity. Every other prize is finally fruitless. Every other grandeur fades with time and dissolves with the elements. In the end, . . . we will know no true joy save it be in Christ.

. . . May we be more devoted and disciplined followers of Christ. May we cherish him in our thoughts and speak his name with love. May we kneel before him with meekness and mercy. May we bless and serve others that they may do the same.⁶



The greatest need in all the world is an active and sincere faith in the Savior and His teachings.

There are those who declare it is old-fashioned to believe in the Bible. Is it old-fashioned to believe in God, in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God? Is it old-fashioned to believe in his atoning sacrifice and the resurrection? If it is, I declare myself to be old-fashioned and the Church is old-fashioned. In great simplicity the Master taught the principles of life eternal and lessons that bring happiness to those with the faith to believe. It doesn't seem reasonable to assume the necessity of modernizing these teachings of the Master. His message concerned principles that are eternal.⁷

In this age, as in every age before us and in every age that will follow, the greatest need in all the world is an active and sincere faith in the basic teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, the living Son of the living God. Because many reject those teachings, that is all the more reason why sincere believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ should proclaim its truth and show by example the power and peace of a righteous, gentle life. . . .

How are we supposed to act when we are offended, misunderstood, unfairly or unkindly treated, or sinned against? What are we supposed to do if we are hurt by those we love, or passed over for promotion, or are falsely accused, or have our motives unfairly assailed?

Do we fight back? Do we send in an ever-larger battalion? Do we revert to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, or . . . do we come to the realization that this finally leaves us blind and toothless? . . .

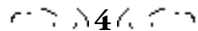
In the majesty of his life and the example of his teachings, Christ gave us much counsel with secure promises always attached. He taught with a grandeur and authority that filled with hope the educated and the ignorant, the wealthy and the poor, the well and the diseased.⁸

Strive to build a personal testimony of Jesus Christ and the atonement. A study of the life of Christ and a testimony of his reality is



The Savior can calm the storms in our lives.

something each of us should seek. As we come to understand his mission, and the atonement which he wrought, we will desire to live more like him.⁹



**As we exercise faith in the Savior, He will
calm the troubled waters of our lives.**

All of us have seen some sudden storms in our lives. A few of them . . . can be violent and frightening and potentially destructive. As individuals, as families, as communities, as nations, even as a church, we have had sudden squalls arise which have made us ask one way or another, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” [Mark 4:38.] And one way or another we always hear in the stillness after the storm, “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” [Mark 4:40.]

None of us would like to think we have *no* faith, but I suppose the Lord’s gentle rebuke here is largely deserved. This great Jehovah,

in whom we say we trust and whose name we have taken upon us, is he who said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” (Gen. 1:6.) And he is also the one who said, “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.” (Gen. 1:9.) Furthermore, it was he who parted the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to pass through on dry ground. (See Ex. 14:21–22.) Certainly it should be no surprise that he could command a few elements acting up on the Sea of Galilee. And our faith should remind us that he can calm the troubled waters of our lives. . . .

We will all have some adversity in our lives. I think we can be reasonably sure of that. Some of it will have the potential to be violent and damaging and destructive. Some of it may even strain our faith in a loving God who has the power to administer relief in our behalf.

To those anxieties I think the Father of us all would say, “Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?” And of course that has to be faith for the whole journey, the entire experience, the fulness of our life, not simply around the bits and pieces and tempestuous moments. . . .

Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33.)¹⁰



**As we center our lives on the Savior, we need not
fear, and our worries will be turned to joys.**

I know enough about your busy and hectic lives to know that you sometimes get frustrated. You might even worry a little bit from time to time. I know all about that. . . .

My message to you today is to “fear not, little flock.” It is to encourage you to rejoice in the great blessings of life. It is to invite you to feel the great thrill of gospel living and our Father in Heaven’s love. Life is wonderful, even in the hard times, and there is happiness, joy, and peace at stops all along the way, and endless portions of them at the end of the road.

Sure, there are plenty of things to worry about—some of them very serious things—but that is why we speak in gospel terms of faith, and hope, and charity. As Latter-day Saints, ours is “the abundant life,” and we try to emphasize our blessings and opportunities while we minimize our disappointments and worries. “Search diligently, pray always, and be believing,” the scripture says, “and all things shall work together for your good” (D&C 90:24). I want to remind you of that promise. . . .

Please remember this one thing. If our lives and our faith are centered upon Jesus Christ and his restored gospel, nothing can ever go permanently wrong. On the other hand, if our lives are not centered on the Savior and his teachings, no other success can ever be permanently right. . . .

We all struggle with health problems occasionally—others do so constantly. Illness and disease are part of the burden of mortality. Have faith and be positive. The power of the priesthood is real, and there is so much that is good in life, even if we struggle physically. It is a joy to know that there will be no injury or disease in the Resurrection.

Some of our concerns may come in the form of temptations. Others may be difficult decisions pertaining to education or career or money or marriage. Whatever your burden is, you will find the strength you need in Christ. Jesus Christ is Alpha and Omega, literally the beginning and the end. He is with us from start to finish, and as such is more than a spectator in our lives. . . .

If the yoke under which we struggle is sin itself, the message is the same. Christ knows the full weight of our sins, for he carried it first. If our burden is not sin nor temptation, but illness or poverty or rejection, it's the same. He knows. . . .

He suffered so much more than our sins. He whom Isaiah called the “man of sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3; Mosiah 14:3) knows perfectly every problem through which we pass because he chose to bear the full weight of all our troubles and our pains. . . .

Brothers and sisters, you have and will have worries and challenges of many kinds, but embrace life joyfully and full of faith. Study the scriptures regularly. Pray fervently. Obey the voice of the

Spirit and the prophets. Do all that you can to help others. You will find great happiness in such a course. Some glorious day all your worries will be turned to joys.

As Joseph Smith wrote to the struggling Saints from his cell in Liberty Jail:

Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed [D&C 123:17; emphasis added].

[In the words of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith:]

Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail. . . .

Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven [D&C 6:34–37].¹¹

Suggestions for Study and Teaching

Questions

- Consider how you would answer President Hunter’s questions in section 1. How can we make Jesus Christ more central in our lives? How can we make Him more central in our homes? How can we come to know Christ better than we know Him?
- What does it “cost us” to receive the hope, joy, and peace that Christ offers? (See section 2.) When have you felt the hope, peace, and joy that come from the Savior?
- Why do you think “the greatest need in all the world is an active and sincere faith in the basic teachings of Jesus of Nazareth”? (See section 3.) How can you show your faith in Christ’s teachings when you feel “offended, misunderstood, unfairly or unkindly treated, or sinned against”?
- What can we learn from President Hunter’s teachings about fear and faith? (See section 4.) How can faith help us overcome fear? Reflect on occasions when the Savior has calmed the storms in your life as you have exercised faith in Him.

- How can President Hunter’s counsel in section 5 help us “embrace life joyfully,” even when we experience sorrows, disappointments, and illnesses? How can we develop an eternal perspective? How has the Savior helped you have a more abundant life?

Related Scriptures

Matthew 11:28–30; John 14:6; 2 Nephi 31:19–21; Alma 5:14–16; 7:10–14; 23:6; Helaman 3:35; 5:9–12; D&C 50:40–46; 93:1

Study Help

“As you study, pay careful attention to ideas that come to your mind and feelings that come to your heart” (*Preach My Gospel* [2004], 18). Consider recording the impressions you receive, even if they seem unrelated to the words you are reading. They may be the very things the Lord wants to reveal to you.

Notes

1. “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 65.
2. “An Apostle’s Witness of Christ,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1984, 70.
3. James E. Faust, “Howard W. Hunter: Man of God,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, 27.
4. “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” 63–64.
5. “What Manner of Men Ought Ye to Be?” *Ensign*, May 1994, 64; see also “He Invites Us to Follow Him,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1994, 5.
6. “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” 64–65.
7. In Eleanor Knowles, *Howard W. Hunter* (1994), 318.
8. “The Beacon in the Harbor of Peace,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 18.
9. *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1997), 30.
10. “Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 33–35.
11. “Fear Not, Little Flock” (address given at Brigham Young University, Mar. 14, 1989), 1–2, 4–5; speeches.byu.edu.