

DISCOURSE

BY

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR,

Delivered in Parowan, Sunday morning, June 24th, 1883.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

Elder George Reynolds, at the request of President Taylor, read Christ's "Sermon on the Mount," after which,

President Taylor spoke as follows: I have had a long discourse read over in your hearing. I do not know that we can listen to anything better than to instructions given by the Savior; and in that discourse is a great amount of intelligence, wisdom, thought, reflection, principle and doctrine presented to our minds. It is full of thought, full of intelligence, and presents to us principles that connect earth with heaven, man with God, and with which are interwoven all our best interests in time and throughout eternity. It is well, therefore, to reflect upon these things—upon the doctrines, teachings and instructions given by our Savior and by ancient men of God who were under the inspiration of the Almighty and who spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost. For if the principles which were enunciated by our Savior in His day were correct they are just as true and correct to-day as they were then, and they are quite as applicable to us as they were to the people to whom He addressed Himself; for they are general principles, and some of them refer to things that are personal, that are associated with our everyday life, and with the spirit and feeling that we ought, as Saints of the Most High God, to be in possession of. Indeed I very much question whether we could find in the same space as comprehensive an exposition of ideas or principles enunciated by any person that ever spoke, as are found in this sermon which was delivered by Jesus upon the Mount. We should have esteemed it a great privilege to have listened to the Son of God, yet we can read His words to-day, and the principles He taught, as I have said, are just as true and important now as they were then.

I desire to speak a little this morning upon some of the duties and responsibilities which devolve upon us as Latter-day Saints, and I feel that—as I often hear the Elders say—I would like to have an interest in your faith and prayers. I like to have the prayers, the faith and confidence of good men and good women, and I feel this morning that I am among good men and good women who are desirous to do the will and keep the commandments of God our heavenly Father—that is, this is the general feeling.

I will say I have been pleased to meet here and greet some of our Presidents of Stakes and other brethren from a distance. Here is Brother McAllister from St. George, and some others who have accompanied him from that region. They have traveled over a hot, sandy desert, quite a long distance to meet with us and to meet with you. Again, here is another President of Stake—Brother Crosby—who has come over these big mountains from Panguitch, and I think some of his folks have come with him from that Stake. Then again, here is Brother Murdock, who has come 35 miles with us, and then you might double that distance by two or three times, for he was at Milford to meet us, and some of his folks are also with us. Then we had the President of Millard Stake—Brother Hinckley—who was with us for several days. It gives me great pleasure to meet with these my brethren of the Priesthood, especially with the Presidents of Stakes and their Counselors, because they hold important positions in the Church and Kingdom of God, and I greet you and bless you in the name of the Lord. There is a spirit exhibited which shows that the brethren feel interested in the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, and that of all others is the thing in which we ought all of us to be interested. [President Cannon: We have also with us Brother Erastus Snow and Brother Jacob Gates.] President Taylor: Oh, yes. We expect them to be everywhere, as we are. We have specially dedicated ourselves to God as active servants in His vineyard; we have dedicated ourselves to do the will of God and to assist in carrying out His purposes, and we feel quite happy in the labor. And I should have been very much pleased, and so would Brother Cannon—

and I do not know but what he wants me to say something about him being here—[laughter]. [Brother Cannon: Oh, no.]—we should have been pleased to have stayed in the country a few days longer, but we cannot do so; that is, we have other duties devolving upon us, and we ought to be in Salt Lake City on Tuesday next. At one time we could not very easily have done this, but we have found out the way—at least, there is a way provided. The Lord has blessed us with many blessings. He has caused us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He has granted unto us His Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and to teach us the principles of righteousness. He has called us to do a great work. How great, could I tell you? No. Could you understand if I did? No, you could not. But He has called us to do a great work—a work in which God our Heavenly Father is interested, a work in which Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant is interested, a work in which Adam is interested, a work in which Seth, Methuselah, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the Prophets are interested, a work in which the Apostles that officiated on the continent of Asia are interested, a work in which the Apostles that officiated on this continent are interested, as well as Lehi, Nephi, Moroni and others who operated here in the cause of God and who sought to carry out His purposes in this land. It is a work in which all men that have ever lived upon the face of the earth are interested. It is a work in which the Gods in the eternal worlds are interested. It is a work that has been spoken of by all the holy Prophets since the world was. It is called the "dispensation of the fullness of times" wherein God will gather together all things in one, whether they be things in the heavens or things in the earth. It is a dispensation in which all the holy Prophets that ever lived upon the face of the earth are interested. They prophesied about it as the grand and great consummation in the accomplishment of the purposes of God; purposes which He designed before the morning stars sang together, or the sons of God shouted for joy, or this world itself rolled into existence. It is a work in which we, our progenitors and our posterity are especially interested. And we are gathered together from among the nations of the earth in order that we may be taught of God, that we may understand the law of God and the principles of life and salvation; a salvation that extends not only to ourselves, but to all mankind. We are gathered together here that we may be placed especially under the tuition and guidance of the Lord, that we may feel and realize that which the ancient Israelites expressed when they said, "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king"—and He shall rule over us and we will be His people; and we His latter-day Israel will acknowledge Him in all things; for we are a chosen people, a royal Priesthood, selected by the God of Israel for the accomplishment of His purposes, for the organization and purification of His Church, for the establishment of His Kingdom, and for the building up of His Zion on the earth. We are indebted to God for the revelation of all those principles that we to-day possess, whether they relate to the Church of God, to the Zion of God, or to the Kingdom of God; so far as any principles thereof have been made manifest and developed unto us they are truly, positively and unequivocally the gift of God our Heavenly Father. They did not originate with us. They did not originate with any man that lived on the earth, for no man knew them. They did not originate with Joseph Smith, or with Brigham Young, or with myself or with the Apostles, or with any class of men in this Church. They are the gift of God to His people, to His children who dwell upon the earth. He has offered these principles freely to the nations of the earth. Thousands and millions of people who have heard them have not received nor obeyed them; but you have—that is, I speak generally, not individually, for some have not obeyed them. Many Latter-day Saints do not comprehend their position. They do not understand the relationship that exists between God and themselves. They do not understand the responsibility of the position that they occupy; some such hold the Holy Priesthood and others are not in the Holy Priesthood. After so many years of teaching and instruction and the many opportunities that we have had, we come far short

of comprehending the principles of life, truth and intelligence which God has seen fit to make manifest to us, and the world do not comprehend them at all. And why cannot they? Because Jesus said very positively in His day that except a man was born again he could not see the Kingdom of God, and unless he was born of the water and of the Spirit he could not enter into the Kingdom of God, and they do not understand it. We cannot help that. But if we could comprehend our own positions and realize the blessings that we have enjoyed, and do now enjoy, and the prospect that lies before us in consequence of God having inclined our hearts to yield obedience to the Gospel of the Son of God, we should call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless His Holy name. We should thank God from morning till evening that we have the privilege of being Latter-day Saints. We should thank Him for the light and intelligence that we have already received, and we should seek for a closer communion with Him that we might comprehend more fully the duties that devolve upon us, and feel in our hearts to do the will of God on earth as angels do it in heaven. We should do this if we could comprehend our true position, and some of us do comprehend it in part. We see in part, we understand in part, we prophecy in part etc., but when that which is perfect is come that which is in part will be done away with. The Lord has gathered us together and is seeking to introduce among this people the principles of Zion, that we may be pure in heart, pure in life, pure in spirit, pure in our actions and that we may all of us feel like saying "O God search my heart and try my reins, search me and prove me, and if there is any way of wickedness within me bid it depart, show it to me that I may overcome it, that I may gain the victory, that I may be worthy to be thy son, that I may be worthy to have thy blessing and thy Spirit and the intelligence that dwells with Thee imparted to me, that I may walk according to thy laws and fulfill the various duties and responsibilities that devolve upon me." That is the kind of feeling we should have if we could realize and comprehend our position. We would seek after the Lord.

In the discourse read by Brother Reynolds this morning it says, among other things, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." I also read with regard to Abraham. He was a man of God, and he tells us in his history that he was a follower after righteousness; that he desired to obtain more righteousness, and that upon examining into the history of his fathers he found that he had a right to the Priesthood and sought ordination, and he received that ordination. He was ordained by Melchizedek, who was prince of Salem and a servant of the Most High God, and held the Priesthood called after his name. It is the Priesthood which is after the order of the Son of God, a Priesthood which possesses the power of an endless life. Abraham received a knowledge of these things; and when he obtained the Priesthood what did he do? Did he, after the manner of some religionists, "sing himself away to everlasting bliss?" No, he did not. What then did he do? He kept seeking after more righteousness. Jesus recognized that principle in his sermon—"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." Abraham sought the Lord diligently, and finally he had given unto him a Urim and Thummim in which he was enabled to obtain a knowledge of many things that others were ignorant of. I think the meaning of the name of this instrument is Light and Perfection, in other terms, communicating light perfectly and intelligence perfectly through a principle that God has ordained for that purpose. Did Abraham stop there? No; he did not rest until he could communicate with God himself. Jesus said: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." The Lord appeared to Abraham and told him many things. And in proportion to the blessings which He conferred upon him, the Lord exacted from Abraham strict obedience to His law, to His word, and to His will, and He tried him to the uttermost. He gave unto him a son. Sarah laughed at the idea when the Lord told her she would have a son. At her time of life—she was 90 years old—it did look a little odd. The Lord asked her what she laughed at. She denied that she had laughed,

but He said, "Nay, but thou didst laugh." There were to be certain blessings associated with this son. The Lord also told Abraham that He would bless him exceedingly and make him a great man upon the earth. Finally this son was born. But there came after a time a time of trial of Abraham's faith. In substance the Lord said to him: "Now, Abraham, take thy son Isaac. You received him from me,"—the same as we all do, if we could understand it, but we do not—he was a son of promise—a great many people are not sons of promise, but still are no less the children of God, for God is the God and father of the spirits of all flesh—"Take thy son and offer him up as a sacrifice." "What?" said Abraham. No; I do not believe that he said that; but I will suppose what he might have said: "Why, Lord, did you not tell me that you would establish your covenant with Isaac for an everlasting covenant and with his seed after him, and that I should become a great and mighty nation, and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in me?" "Yes." "And now you tell me to offer my promised son as a sacrifice? What are you going to do about it?" "You have got to obey me, that is all." Abraham did not begin to question the Lord if He could find a precedent for such a thing in the Scriptures, or whether such a thing had ever taken place anywhere else. No; he proceeded to carry out the commandment of the Lord. I fancy I can see Abraham undergoing this trial. I wonder what his feelings were. What would your feelings be if you were commanded to sacrifice your promised son? Well, Abraham took his son into the mountain. They built an altar. And finally Isaac said to his father: "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? What would you have thought if you had been in Abraham's place? Yet Abraham was a righteous man and sought after righteousness, sought after God, and God had talked with him and blessed him in a very remarkable manner, and given him a son where there was no prospect naturally of his wife Sarah having one. How would you have felt, you fathers here, if you had been placed in the same position? But Abraham nerved himself up and said: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering—thou thyself art that lamb!" He thereupon bound Isaac and laid him on the altar. He lifted the knife and was about to strike the fatal blow, when the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven and said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son." And the Lord said, "Because thou hast done this thing and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

I speak of these things to show how men are to be tried. I heard Joseph Smith say—and I presume Brother Snow heard him also—in preaching to the Twelve in Nauvoo, that the Lord would get hold of their heart strings and wrench them; and that they would have to be tried as Abraham was tried. Well, some of the Twelve could not stand it. They faltered and fell by the way. It was not everybody that could stand what Abraham stood. And Joseph said that if God had known any other way whereby he could have touched Abraham's feelings more acutely and more keenly he would have done so. It was not only his parental feelings that were touched. There was something else besides. He had the promise that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of the heaven and as the sand upon the sea shore. He had looked forward through the vista of future ages and seen, by the spirit of revelation, myriads of his people rise up through whom God would convey intelligence, light and salvation to a world. But in being called upon to sacrifice His son it seemed as though all His prospects pertaining to posterity were to come to naught. But he had faith in God,

and he fulfilled the thing that was required of him. Yet we cannot conceive of anything that could be more trying and more perplexing than the position in which he was placed.

Now, although I have said considerable in regard to Abraham, I will say a word or two more. I said that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Who was Isaac, and who was Jacob? Heirs with him to the same promise. Who was Moses? A man that was raised up to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Who was he? A descendant of Abraham. Who were the Prophets whom we receive this Bible? The seed of Abraham. Who were the prophets from whom we received this Book of Mormon? They were of the seed of Abraham. Who was Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant? Of the seed of Abraham. Who were the Apostles of the seed of Abraham. Who were the people that came to this continent? The seed of Abraham. Who were the Apostles that were up here? They were of the seed of Abraham. Who was Joseph Smith, the Prophet of God raised up in these last days? He was a descendant of Joseph, the son of Jacob, and his father's name was Joseph, as has been anciently prophesied should be the case, when the work he should perform was being referred to. Who are this people? A great many are of the seed of Abraham. And who is God doing with us? Has He raised us up to injure mankind? For what are the Twelve Apostles appointed? To preach the Gospel to all mankind. What are these Quorums of Seventies for? Here, one of their Presidents. What are those quorums for, Brother Gates? [Brother Jacob Gates: To preach the Gospel to all the world.] Yes, to preach the Gospel to the nations of the earth—messengers of Jehovah, to communicate the glad tidings of salvation to a fallen world, declare that the heavens have been opened, that God has spoken, that the eternal principles of life have been revealed, and that we are commissioned to make known unto nations of the earth the glad tidings of salvation which God has ordered. Again, what are the Elders for? The same thing. Then other principles. We are gathered together here that we might be taught of God, that we might be placed under His tuition, under His guidance and under His direction. As it is written: "They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall know me from the least of them, the greatest of them." We are to learn of His ways and to walk His paths.

We are living, as I said, in a dispensation of the fullness of time when God will gather together all things in one, whether they be things on the earth or things in the heavens, whether they appertain to Adam, or Seth, or Enos, or Mahalaleel, or Methuselah, or Noah, or Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or the Prophets, or Jesus, or the people that have lived in the dispensations who have possessed the Gospel of the Son of God, people on this continent or any other continent, they are all interested in this work. Heaven is engaged in carrying out the work that we are engaged in to-day. They are looking upon us watching our acts, and are moved in this great work. As I will say to-day as He did in times: "Tough not mine angels, and do my prophets no harm." I say woe to them that lift their hands against the anointed of God for God will be after them to have a work to perform. We are to build up the Church of the Father of God, and to see that the principles of purity and the law of God are enforced. They may speak upon this. They say: "And every man that is this hope in him, purifieth even as he is pure." Again, Scriptures say: "Be not deceived. God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Being gathered together, we are, and having our organization of the First Presidency, of Twelve Apostles, of the Presidency of Stakes and their counselors, the Bishops and their counselors, of High Councils, of Priests, of Elders and Deacons, and of all the organizations and organizations of Holy Priesthood according to the pattern that exists in the heaven.