

we will be able to save this lamb, and I feel it will be all right.”

The sad note to this story, brethren, is that within a few minutes the second lamb was dead. Then with a look that I will remember forever, this little six-year-old boy who had lost both of his lambs looked up into his father’s face and with tears running down his cheeks said, “Daddy, if you had come home when I first called you, we could have saved them both.”

Be with the lambs when needed

Dear brethren of the priesthood, those who are entrusted as keepers of the Lord’s precious flock—we must be there with the lambs when we are needed. We must teach with love, principles of faith, and goodness and be righteous examples to the lambs of our Heavenly Father. Each quorum member must be prepared for his future role as a bearer of the holy Melchizedek Priesthood in

a world plagued with sin and desperate for decisive moral leadership.

I leave my witness that this is God’s work. It is the most important work in all the world in which we can be engaged. That we will be instruments in His hands in saving the precious lambs for which He gave His life, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We’ve just listened to Elders Charles Didier and Richard P. Lindsay of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing “Oh Say, What Is Truth?” We shall then hear from Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy, who is currently presiding as president of the New York Rochester Mission.

The choir and congregation sang “Oh Say, What Is Truth?”

Elder Marlin K. Jensen

Brethren, I am grateful to be a part of this vast assembly of priesthood bearers. I am also especially mindful of a wonderful little band of missionaries with which my wife and I are currently blessed to labor in the New York Rochester Mission. Speaking perhaps for all mission presidents and the missionaries’ parents, I wish to say during my temporary absence from them, “Please work hard, drive carefully, and be good!”

The power of a good life

All of us who hold the priesthood of God are involved in a glorious common cause—helping our Father in Heaven bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39). This task, in its simplest form, involves qualifying ourselves for the blessings of the Savior’s

atonement and helping others to do the same.

Over the years as I have struggled with my own weaknesses and have tried in my way to help others overcome theirs, I have received assistance and motivation from a variety of sources. Personal prayer, my knowledge of an interested, loving Father in Heaven and His plan of salvation, the scriptures, the temple, and the promptings of the Holy Ghost have been especially helpful. However, even more immediate than these in some ways have been the influence and inspiration provided by the lives of noble people. I am ever impressed and deeply moved by the power of even one good life.

From among many exemplary lives in our rich history as a people, I wish to share examples from just two. The first

is from the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Joseph Smith silences prison guards

During a bitter winter of imprisonment in Richmond, Missouri, Joseph and some fifty other brethren were subjected to great hardship and exposure. One of their greatest trials was to endure the blasphemies and filthy language of their guards as they boasted of their unspeakable cruelty to the Saints.

Of one particularly tedious night, Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote:

"I had listened till I became so disgusted, shocked, horrified, and so filled with the spirit of indignant justice that I could scarcely refrain from rising upon my feet and rebuking the guards; but had said nothing to Joseph, or any one else, although I lay next to him and knew he was awake. On a sudden he arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:

"SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!"

"He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel, he looked upon the quailing guards, whose weapons were lowered or dropped to the ground; whose knees smote together, and who, shrinking into a corner, or crouching at his feet, begged his pardon, and remained quiet till a change of guards."

Elder Pratt continues:

"I have seen the ministers of justice, clothed in magisterial robes, and criminals arraigned before them, while life was suspended on a breath, in the Courts of England; I have witnessed a Congress in solemn session to give laws

to nations; I have tried to conceive of kings, of royal courts, of thrones and crowns; and of emperors assembled to decide the fate of kingdoms; but dignity and majesty have I seen but *once*, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], pp. 210-11).

Does not this image of the Prophet Joseph courageously rebuking the forces of evil move us to do likewise?

Willard Bean, the "fighting parson"

The second example is from the life of Willard Bean, a remarkable man who became known as the "fighting parson." In the spring of 1915, Willard and his new bride, Rebecca, were called by President Joseph F. Smith to serve a mission for "five years or longer" in Palmyra, New York (Vicki Bean Toppliff, *Willard Bean: "The Fighting Parson"* [Huntington Beach, Calif.: n.p., 1989], p. 87; for the account of their life in Palmyra, see pages 86-131). Their task was to occupy the recently acquired Joseph Smith home and farm and to reestablish the Church in the hostile environment which still existed at the time in Palmyra.

The Beans were rebuffed on every front as they settled into the Smith home. The townspeople would not speak to them or wait on them in their stores. Passersby would pause in front of the home and shout obscenities. Their children were assigned to sit in the back corners of the schoolroom and were shunned by the other children in class.

Willard, who was an accomplished athlete and had been a prize-winning boxer, decided to improve public relations by putting on a boxing exhibition in Palmyra. A ring was set up in an old opera house, and the "fighting parson" challenged all comers to a boxing match.

When the night of the exhibition arrived, the toughest men in Palmyra sat

in the first few rows. One by one they entered the ring, only to be carried out again in a matter of seconds! This continued until the seventh challenger was similarly disposed.

Brother Bean's fighting abilities were more spontaneously employed on another occasion as he walked along the unfriendly streets of Palmyra. A man watering his front lawn one afternoon suddenly turned the hose on Willard and taunted, "I understand you people believe in baptism by immersion." The spry, athletic Willard reportedly vaulted over the fence separating them and replied, "Yes, and we also believe in the laying on of hands" (*Willard Bean: "The Fighting Parson,"* p. 14).

Although Brother Bean's methods were a little unorthodox and definitely not compatible with the current approved missionary program of the Church, they were nonetheless effective. The people of Palmyra began begrudgingly to yield and to accept the Beans as the good people they were. In time, they were invited to participate in local churches and to join the civic organizations of the day. They established a branch of the Church and helped acquire the Hill Cumorah and the Martin Harris and Peter Whitmer farms. The "five years or longer" mission to which the prophet had called them stretched to nearly twenty-five years before it concluded. During that time, the attitude of the people of Palmyra had changed from hostility toward the Beans to toleration, then admiration, and finally to love. The power of good lives is truly great.

One piece of horehound candy

I am personally greatly motivated by the modest written and oral traditions of my own fathers which have been handed down.

For instance, as a young boy, my great-grandfather arose one Christmas morning with great anticipation and

came down from the loft where he slept to inspect the stocking he had hung by the fireplace the previous night. To his dismay he found what was to constitute his entire Christmas that year—one piece of horehound candy! He was immediately faced with a weighty decision: Should he eat the candy in one glorious burst of flavor, or should he make it last? The scarcity of such delicacies apparently convinced him to make it last. He carefully licked the solitary piece of candy a few times and then wrapped it in tissue paper and hid it under his mattress. Each Sunday thereafter, following dinner, he retreated to his bed, retrieved his treasure, and enjoyed a few pleasurable licks. In that way he nursed the piece of candy through an entire year's enjoyment.

This is obviously not an account of deeds of heroic proportions. And yet, in these times of overindulgence and excess, it is somehow very inspiring and strengthening to me to know that a little of my great-grandfather's frugal blood flows in my own veins.

Our need for good influences

The Lord is surely aware of our need to feel the influence of good people. That may be one reason why He has established a pattern of companionships as we work together through the priesthood to serve Him and His children. That also may be why He has counseled that "if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also" (D&C 84:106).

I have personally experienced the benefit of such a priesthood apprenticeship. In my Aaronic Priesthood years, a man who this evening is a silver-haired stake patriarch became my "senior" home teaching companion. Under his wise tutelage, and in spite of considerable resistance on my part, I learned

for the first time how to “warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ” (D&C 20:59). When the time later came at age nineteen for a full-time mission, I did not really need a missionary preparation course; I had had one! I thank God for the love and influence of such mentors.

“Just send your father!”

Before concluding, I hope you will pardon a personal reference to my own father and the power of his good life in mine. For a half century now I have benefited from his wisdom, his generosity, and his goodness. I am not sure I realized the full extent of his influence until recently as I prepared to return home following the final session of a stake conference to which I had been assigned. An elderly brother came up from the congregation to meet me. He thanked me for coming, and then, in obvious reference to the many times I must have quoted my father and referred to his teachings during the conference sessions, he said, “Brother Jensen, if you are ever assigned again to our stake, why don’t you just send your father!” My hope is that in some small way I will have a similar influence for lasting good in the lives of our own children.

President Thomas S. Monson

The priesthood—a sacred trust

What a solemn thought, to contemplate the vast priesthood audience assembled here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square and gathered in hundreds of buildings throughout the world! I sincerely pray for the Spirit of the Lord to guide my remarks this evening.

The presence of those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood brings to mind my own experiences as I graduated from

A lasting influence for good

The list of valiant people whose lives touch our own includes family members, missionary companions, friends, Church leaders, teachers, and associates from various walks of life. Some we know intimately and others only by reputation. Less obvious to most of us is the influence we may be having in the lives of others. This interaction, to me, is one of the reasons why a community of believing Latter-day Saints is a foundational element of the gospel. It also explains why we build meetinghouses rather than hermitages.

It is through the lives of good people that we at least in part become better acquainted with the greatest of all lives. When we see Christ’s image in the countenances of others, it helps us live to receive it in our own.

I thank God for the blessing of good people in all of our lives and pray that we may all in some small way serve that same purpose in the lives of others, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Seventy has just spoken to us.

It will now be my opportunity to express a few thoughts on this occasion.

Primary, having memorized the Articles of Faith, and then received the Aaronic Priesthood and the office and calling of a deacon. To pass the sacrament was a privilege, and to gather fast offerings a sacred trust. I was set apart as the secretary of the deacons quorum and, at that moment, felt that boyhood had passed and young manhood had begun.

Can you young men realize the shock I felt, while attending an officers’ meeting of our ward conference, when a