

Elder Steven E. Snow

Ignoring the beauty in our own backyard

Growing up in southern Utah, some of us sought employment at the many gasoline service stations that lined Highway 91 as it made its way through downtown St. George. My younger brother Paul, then 18, worked at Tom's Service, a station located about three blocks from our home.

One summer day a car with New York license plates pulled in the station and asked for a fill-up. (For you brethren under the age of 30, in those days someone actually came out and filled your car with gas, washed your windows, and checked your oil.) While Paul was washing the windshield, the driver asked him how far it was to the Grand Canyon. Paul replied that it was 170 miles.

"I've waited all my life to see the Grand Canyon," the man exclaimed. "What's it like out there?"

"I don't know," Paul answered. "I've never been there."

"You mean to tell me," the man responded, "that you live two and a half hours from one of the seven wonders of the world and you've never been there!"

"That's right," Paul said.

After a moment, the man replied, "Well, I guess I can understand that. My wife and I have lived in Manhattan for over 20 years, and we've never visited the Statue of Liberty."

"I've been there," Paul said.

Isn't it ironic, brethren, that we will often travel many miles to see the wonders of nature or the creations of man, but yet ignore the beauty in our own backyard?

It is human nature, I suppose, to seek elsewhere for our happiness. Pursuit of career goals, wealth, and material rewards can cloud our perspective and often leads to a lack of appreciation for the bounteous blessings of our present circumstances.

"Let thy heart be full of thanks"

It is precarious to dwell on why we have not been given more. It is, however, beneficial and humbling to dwell on why we have been given so much.

An old proverb states, "The greater wealth is contentment with a little."

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

Alma instructed his son Helaman, giving him counsel that all fathers should teach their children: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 37:37).

Alma says, "Let thy heart be full of thanks unto God." The Lord desires that we give thanks. In Thessalonians we read, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Express gratitude in all prayers

As holders of the priesthood we should constantly strive to increase our gratitude. Gratitude may be increased by constantly reflecting on our blessings and giving thanks for them in our daily prayers.

President David O. McKay has said: "The young man who closes the door behind him, who draws the curtains, and there in silence pleads with God for help, should first pour out his soul in gratitude for health, for friends, for loved ones, for the gospel, for the manifestations of God's existence. He should first count his many blessings and name them one by one" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1961, 8).

A constant expression of gratitude should be included in all our prayers. Often prayers are given for specific blessings which we, in our incomplete understanding, believe we need. While the Lord does answer prayers according to His will, He certainly must be pleased when we offer humble prayers of gratitude.

Brethren, the next time we pray, instead of presenting the Lord petition after petition for some action in our behalf, give Him thoughtful thanks for all with which He has blessed us.

President Joseph F. Smith has instructed us that "the spirit of gratitude is always pleasant and satisfying because it carries with it a sense of helpfulness to others; it begets love and friendship, and engenders divine influence. Gratitude is said to be the memory of the heart" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 262).

Pioneers' gratitude in spite of difficulty

In October 1879, a group of 237 Latter-day Saints from several small southwestern Utah settlements was called to blaze a new route and colonize what is today known as San Juan County in southeastern Utah. The journey was to have taken six weeks but instead took nearly six months. Their struggles and heroics are well documented, particularly their seemingly impossible task of crossing the Colorado River at a place called Hole-in-the-Rock. Those who have visited this

place marvel that wagons and teams could have been lowered through this narrow crack in the red rock canyon walls to reach the Colorado River far below. Once the Colorado was crossed, however, many other severe tests awaited them on the trail to San Juan County. Tired and worn out, early in April 1880 they faced their final obstacle, Comb Ridge. The Comb is a ridge of solid sandstone forming a steep wall nearly 1,000 feet high.

One hundred and twenty years later, our family climbed Comb Ridge on a bright spring day. The ridge is steep and treacherous. It was difficult to imagine that wagons, teams, men, women, and children could make such an ascent. But beneath our feet were the scars from the wagon wheels, left as evidence of their struggles so long ago. How did they feel after enduring so much? Were they bitter after the many months of toil and privation? Did they criticize their leaders for sending them on such an arduous journey, asking them to give up so much? Our questions were answered as we reached the top of Comb Ridge. There inscribed in the red sandstone so long ago were the words, "We thank Thee, O God."

Brethren, I pray that we might keep our hearts full of thanks and appreciation for what we have and not dwell on what is not ours. As holders of the priesthood, let us adopt an attitude of gratitude in all we do is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Keith K. Hilbig

Your link in the priesthood chain

Within this vast congregation of priesthood bearers assembled here and throughout the world sit several generations—tens of thousands of sons, fathers, grandfathers, even great-grandfathers—all of whom have faith in Christ, seek to keep His commandments, and desire to serve Him.

Some are part of a long tradition of priesthood men stretching back in time. Others are the very first men in their respective families to bear the priesthood of God. But all have the opportunity—and responsibility—either to create or to continue a chain of worthy men who honor the priesthood and render service in the kingdom, thereby linking families to-