

Remembering the Lord's Love

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We must seek to know and feel the Lord's love in our lives.

Christ in a Red Robe, by Minerva Teichert, seemed the perfect painting to depict the scripture that we chose for this evening: “I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love” (2 Nephi 1:15). Christ looks so welcoming with His arms outstretched toward us. Just as He invited the Nephites to “arise and come forth unto me” (3 Nephi 11:15), so He invites each of us to come, one by one, to Him, that we too may know that He is “the God of ... the whole earth, and [has] been slain for the sins of the world” (3 Nephi 11:14). We learn how it feels to be encircled in His love when we accept that invitation.

I'm certain that each of you has felt, at one time or another, encircled in Christ's arms. But if you are like me, there are times when you are fearful, when the stress and busyness of life seem to overwhelm you, when you feel adrift from the Spirit. Perhaps you even feel as though you have been abandoned. When I encounter those feelings, the best antidote is my *memory* of the moments when Christ's peace has come to strengthen me. So tonight I invite you to *remember* with me what it is to feel the Lord's love in your life and to feel encircled in His arms.

My mother died when I was a young mother. I still needed her counsel and advice. After her cancer was diagnosed, she lived only six weeks. Initially, my concern was for my father. I felt grateful that Mom had not suffered long and that her death had been a sweet experience for us. But a few weeks later Mother's Day and her birthday were coming, and I began to miss her terribly. I wanted her arms around me, and I wanted to know that she was all right. I wanted to tell her that I loved her and missed her.

One night as I was praying and crying (which I did often then), I felt comfort fill my body—suddenly and powerfully. The feeling restored me; it gave me peace. It did not last long physically, yet it was immensely comforting. I knew what it was—the Lord's love encircling me and granting me peace and strength. But just as important, that moment has remained in my memory as a sweet gift to unwrap and *remember* when life is difficult.

Sometimes, too, the moments of love and the resultant peace have come unexpectedly and when there has been no need—no particular problem or issue I have been facing. One lovely autumn Sabbath I was sitting in my scripture-reading chair, watching the yellow leaves fall from our neighbor's apricot tree. I looked up from my scriptures and without warning felt a sense of peace and contentment wash over me. The moment was fleeting, yet the memory of the love I felt has been lasting. It is a gift of memory to recall when life and times are difficult.

But every day, when I *seek* it, I experience the Lord's love in my life and feel His arms encircle me. I see evidences of the Lord's love in my morning walks when the air is clear and the first hint of light is in the east. I feel His love when a verse of scripture springs to mind and speaks to me in a new way. I recognize His love when I am taught by good women in Relief Society or by visiting teachers who care for me. I sense His presence when my heart responds to beautiful music or a memorable talk. Sisters, the Lord is everywhere when we open our eyes and hearts to His love.

But there are women among you, I'm sure, who are thinking now, "When do I have time for a morning walk? When was the last time I had 10 minutes of peace to read my scriptures?" Or, "When was the last time I had a day without pain? or worry? or heartache?" And I recognize how true it is that life often feels like a great pile of obligations, frustrations, and disappointments. But the Lord is there, always the same, His arms still outstretched. When we feel overwhelmed, we have to *remember* the peace He has spoken to us on previous occasions. *His* peace brings comfort and strength; the world cannot give that to us.

As faithful women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have been blessed with the Holy Ghost. As we invite the Savior into our lives, the Holy Ghost will bear witness to us of the love which the Father and His Son, our Savior, have for each of us. But feeling Their love is dependent not only on our desire but upon our actions as well. And the actions we need to take are known to us: genuine prayer that is specific and humble, followed by quiet listening for the Lord's answers; regular scripture study and time to ponder what we read; and, finally, a willingness to be introspective about ourselves and to trust in the Lord's promise that He will "make weak things become strong unto [us]" (Ether 12:27). As we study and ponder, we are entitled to the promptings of the Spirit, and as we grow more attentive to these promptings, we come to recognize each day the workings of the Lord in our lives. We will find Him, as Elder Neal A. Maxwell stated, "in the details of our lives" ("Becoming a Disciple," *Ensign*, June 1996, 19). And when that recognition comes, we feel His peace and recognize that we are truly encircled in the arms of His love.

In the January 2004 worldwide leadership training meeting, President Gordon B. Hinckley admonished the women of the Church to "stand strong and immovable" against the evil that is growing in the world ("Standing Strong and Immovable," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, Jan. 10, 2004, 20). Sisters, this is why we must seek to know and feel the Lord's love in our lives. It is why we must remember and treasure up our own experiences with His peace and the strength it brings. And it is why we must relate our own experiences of faith and testimony to our children and to those who are without parents or loved ones.

Our families need the peace of God in their lives, and if we can't or won't invite the Lord into our lives, then our families become a reflection of our own turmoil. Women are asked to be nurturers to their families, but we must also be firm; we must be the hard rock footings on which our homes can stand. Our families need us to speak peace to them, just as the Lord speaks peace to us. Our homes need to be places where our families and friends want to be, where all who enter our homes can draw strength and courage to face the challenges of living in an increasingly wicked world. Our children need to hear us "talk of Christ, ... rejoice in Christ, [and] preach of Christ" (2 Nephi 25:26) so that they may know to what source they can look for the peace that "passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

Remember, sisters, the Savior's invitation is clear and direct, and importantly for us, it is constant: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden. ... Take my yoke upon you, ... for ... my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). This is the Lord's promise to me and to you.

My prayer for each of us is that we will remember when the Lord has spoken His peace to us and has encircled us in the arms of His love. And just as important, will you, if you haven't felt that love for a while, seek to see it and feel it as you go about the ordinary tasks of your life. As you do this, over the days and months and years of your life, the memories of those interactions with the Lord will become sweet gifts to open a second time—or many times—to bolster you when life is difficult.

“Peace I give unto you,” the Lord promises, “not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27). Peace. Strength. It is what we long for and what is possible. We only need to turn toward His reaching arms. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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