

“I Am He”

By President Jeffrey R. Holland

Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

»Det er mig«

Præsident Jeffrey R. Holland

Fungerende præsident for De Tolv Apostles Kvorum

October 2024 general conference

Christ's charity—evident in complete loyalty to divine will—persisted and continues to persist.

It is the Sabbath day, and we have gathered to speak of Christ and Him crucified. I know that my Redeemer lives.

Consider this scene from the last week of Jesus's mortal life. A multitude had gathered, including Roman soldiers armed with staves and strapped with swords. Led by officers from the chief priests who had torches in hand, this earnest company was not off to conquer a city. Tonight they were looking for only one man, a man not known to carry a weapon, receive military training, or engage in physical combat at any time in His entire life.

As the soldiers approached, Jesus, in an effort to protect His disciples, stepped forth and said, “Whom seek ye?” They replied, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said, “I am he. ... As soon ... as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.”

To me, that is one of the most stirring lines in all of scripture. Among other things, it tells me straightforwardly that just being in the presence of the Son of God—the great Jehovah of the Old Testament and Good Shepherd of the New, who bears no weapons of any kind—that just hearing the voice of this Refuge from the Storm, this Prince of Peace, is enough to send antagonists stumbling into retreat, piling them in a jumble, making the whole group wish they had been assigned kitchen duty that night.

Just a few days earlier, when He had entered the city triumphantly, “all the city was moved,” the scripture says, asking, “Who is this?” I can

Kristi barmhjertighed – der kom til udtryk i komplet loyalitet mod den guddommelige vilje – varede ved og fortsætter med at vare ved.

Det er sabbatsdag, og vi er samlet for at tale om »Kristus, og det som korsfæstet«. Jeg ved, at min Forløser lever.

Overvej denne scene fra den sidste uge af Jesu jordiske liv. En stor skare havde samlet sig, deriblandt romerske soldater, med sværd og knipler. Anført af ypperstepræsternes officerer med fakler i hånden, var denne alvorlige gruppe ikke ude for at indtage en by. Denne aften var de alene ude for at finde en enkelt mand, en mand, der ikke var kendt for at bære våben, have militær træning og ej heller at befatte sig med fysiske konflikter i sit liv overhovedet.

Da soldaterne nærmede sig, trådte Jesus i et forsøg på at beskytte sine disciple frem og spurgte: »Hvem leder I efter?« De svarede: »Jesus fra Nazaret.« Han sagde: »Det er mig.« »Da Jesus sagde: »Det er mig,« veg de tilbage og faldt om på jorden.«

For mig er dette en af de mest gribende linjer i skrifterne. Blandt meget andet fortæller den mig helt tydeligt, at blot det at være i Guds Søns nærhed—Det Gamle Testaments store Jahve og Det Nye Testaments gode Hyrde, som ikke bærer våben af nogen art—blot at høre den stemme, som er Ly for skybrud, denne Fredsfyrste, er nok til at sende modstandere på tilbagetog, bulte dem op i stakke, og få dem alle til at ønske, at de havde fået køkkentjansen den aften.

Blot få dage forinden var der ifølge skriften blevet »røre i hele byen«, da han ankom til byen i triumf, og folk spurgte: »Hvem er han?« Jeg kan

only imagine that “Who is this?” is the question those muddled soldiers were now asking!

The answer to that question could not have been in His looks, for Isaiah had prophesied some seven centuries earlier that “he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” It certainly wasn’t in His polished wardrobe or His great personal wealth, of which He had neither. It could not be from any professional training in the local synagogues because we have no evidence that He ever studied at any of them, though even in His youth He could confound superbly prepared scribes and lawyers, astonishing them with His doctrine “as one having authority.”

From that teaching in the temple to His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and this final, unjustifiable arrest, Jesus was routinely placed in difficult, often devious situations in which He was always triumphant—victories for which we have no explanation except divine DNA.

Yet down through history many have simplified, even trivialized our image of Him and His witness of who He was. They have reduced His righteousness to mere prudishness, His justice to mere anger, His mercy to mere permissiveness. We must not be guilty of such simplistic versions of Him that conveniently ignore teachings we find uncomfortable. This “dumbing down” has been true even regarding His ultimate defining virtue, His love.

During His mortal mission, Jesus taught that there were two great commandments. They have been taught in this conference and will forever be taught: “Love the Lord thy God [and] love thy neighbour as thyself.” If we are to follow the Savior faithfully in these two crucial and inextricably linked rules, we ought to hold firmly to what He actually said. And what He actually said was, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” On that same evening, He said we were to “love one another; as I have loved you.”

In those scriptures, those qualifying phrases defining true, Christlike love—sometimes referred to as charity—are absolutely essential.

What do they define? How did Jesus love?

First, He loved with “all [of His] heart, might, mind and strength,” giving Him the ability to heal the deepest pain and declare the hardest reality. In short, He is one who could administer grace and insist on truth at the same time. As Lehi said

kun forestille mig, at »hvem er ham?« var det samme spørgsmål, som soldaterne nu stillede sig!

Svaret på det spørgsmål kunne ikke findes i hans udseende, for Esajas havde omtrent 700 år forinden profeteret, at »hans skikkelse havde ingen skønhed, vi så ham, men vi brød os ikke om synet«. Det var bestemt hverken i hans flotte klæder eller hans store personlige rigdom, for han havde ingen af delene. Det kunne ikke komme fra nogen formel uddannelse i den lokale synagoge, for vi har ingen beviser for, at han nogensinde havde fået en sådan, selvom han som ganske ung kunne slå de fremragende og forberedte skrivere og lovkyndige med undren over hans lære, »som en, der har myndighed«.

Fra den undervisning i templet til sit indtog i Jerusalem og denne sidste uretfærdige anholdelse blev Jesus regelmæssigt sat i svære, ofte bedrageriske situationer, hvor han altid triumferede – sejre vi kun kan forklare med guddommeligt DNA.

Alligevel har mange gennem historien forsimplet, tilmed banaliseret, vores billede af ham og hans vidnesbyrd om, hvem han var. De har reduceret hans retskaffenhed til ren forstokkethed, hans retfærd til vrede, hans nåde til eftergivenhed. Vi må være på vagt over for enhver forsimplet version af ham, der på bekvemmelig vis ignorerer lærdomme, som vi finder ubekvemme. Denne »talen ned« har været gældende, selv når vi taler om hans ultimative dyd; hans kærlighed.

Mens Jesus gik og levede på jorden, underviste han om, at der var to store bud. Der er blevet undervist om dem ved denne konference, og der vil altid blive undervist om dem: »Elsk[] Herren din Gud ... [og] elsk[] din næste som dig selv.« Hvis vi trofast vil følge Frelseren på disse to afgørende og uløseligt forbundne lovpunkter, bør vi holde os strikt til, hvad han rent faktisk sagde. Og det han rent faktisk sagde var: »Elsker I mig, så hold mine bud.« Den samme aften sagde han: »I skal elske hinanden. Som jeg har elsket jer.«

I disse skriftsteder er de kvalificerende sætninger, der definerer sand kristuslignende kærlighed – der sommetider omtales som næstekærlighed – altafgørende.

Hvad definerer de? Hvordan elskede Jesus?

For det første elskede han af hele sit »hjerte, kraft, sind og styrke«, hvilket gav ham evnen til at hele den dybeste smerte og ytre barske realiteter. Kort sagt, er han en, der kunne formidle nåde og samtidig insistere på sandhed. Som Lehi sagde i

in his blessing to his son Jacob, “Redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth.” His love allows an encouraging embrace when it is needed and a bitter cup when it has to be swallowed. So we try to love—with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength—because that is the way He loves us.

The second characteristic of Jesus’s divine charity was His obedience to every word that proceeded from God’s mouth, always aligning His will and behavior with that of His Heavenly Father.

When He arrived on the Western Hemisphere following His Resurrection, Christ said to the Nephites: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ. ... I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, ... in the which I have suffered the will of the Father ... from the beginning.”

Of the myriad ways He could have introduced Himself, Jesus did so by declaring His obedience to the will of the Father—never mind that not long before in His hour of greatest need, this Only Begotten Son of God had felt totally abandoned by His Father. Christ’s charity—evident in complete loyalty to divine will—persisted and continues to persist, not just through the easy and comfortable days but especially through the darkest and most difficult ones.

Jesus was “a man of sorrows,” the scriptures say. He experienced sadness, fatigue, disappointment, and excruciating loneliness. In these and in all times, Jesus’s love faileth not, and neither does His Father’s. With such mature love—the kind that exemplifies, empowers, and imparts—ours will not fail either.

So, if sometimes the harder you try, the more difficult it seems to get; if, just as you try to work on your limitations and your shortcomings, you find someone or something determined to challenge your faith; if, as you labor devotedly, you still feel moments of fear wash over you, remember that it has been so for some of the most faithful and marvelous people in every era of time. Also remember that there is a force in the universe determined to oppose every good thing you try to do.

So, through abundance as well as poverty, through private acclaim as well as public criticism, through the divine elements of the Restoration as well as the human foibles that will

sin velsignelse til sin søn Jakob: »Forløsningen [udvirkes] i og ved den hellige Messias, for han er fuld af nåde og sandhed.« Hans kærlighed tillader et opmuntrende kram, når det er tiltrængt, og et bittert bæger, når det må tømmes. Så vi prøver på at elske – af hele vores hjerte, kraft, sind og styrke – for det er sådan, han elsker os.

Et andet kendetegn ved Jesu guddommelige kærlighed var hans lydighed mod hvert ord, der udgik af Guds mund, og at han altid afstemte sin vilje og adfærd med sin himmelske Faders.

Da Kristus kom til den vestlige halvkugle efter sin opstandelse, sagde han til nefitterne: »Se, jeg er Jesus Kristus ... Jeg har drukket af det bitre bæger, som Faderen har givet mig ... hvorved jeg har underkastet mig Faderens vilje i alt fra begyndelsen.«

Af alle de utallige måder Jesus kunne have introduceret sig selv på, gjorde han det ved at erklære sin lydighed mod Faderens vilje – det var ikke vigtigt, at han, Guds Enbårne Søn, ikke så længe forinden i sin sværeste stund havde følt sig helt forladt af sin Fader. Kristi kærlighed – der kom til udtryk i komplet loyalitet mod den guddommelige vilje – varede ved og fortsætter med at vare ved, ikke blot på de lette og gode dage, men særligt på de mørkeste og sværeste af slagsen.

Jesus var »en lidelsesmand«, som der står i skriften. Han kendte til at være ked af det, udmattet, skuffet og ulideligt alene. I disse og alle andre tider svigter Jesu kærlighed aldrig, ej heller gør hans Faders. Med en sådan moden kærlighed – den anskueliggørende, bestyrkende og bibringende af slagsen – vil vores vilje heller aldrig fejle.

Så hvis det sommetider virker sværere, jo mere I prøver; hvis nogen eller noget, ligesom I beslutter jer for at arbejde med jeres begrænsninger og jeres utilstrækkeligheder, vælger at udfordre jeres tro; hvis I arbejder hengivent og alligevel føler frygten skylle ind over jer, så husk, at det samme har gjort sig gældende for nogle af de mest lydige og beundringsværdige mennesker gennem alle tidsaldre. Husk også, at der er en kraft i universet, der er opsat på at forpurre alt det gode, som I prøver at gøre.

Såvel igennem overflod som fattigdom, igennem personlig anerkendelse som offentlig kritik, igennem genoprettelsens guddommelige elementer som de menneskelige svagheder, der

inevitably be part of it, we stay the course with the true Church of Christ. Why? Because as with our Redeemer, we signed on for the whole term—not ending with the first short introductory quiz but through to the final exam. The joy in this is that the Headmaster gave us all open-book answers before the course began. Furthermore, we have a host of tutors who remind us of these answers at regular stops along the way. But of course, none of this works if we keep cutting class.

“Whom seek ye?” With all our hearts we answer, “Jesus of Nazareth.” When He says, “I am he,” we bow our knee and confess with our tongue that He is the living Christ, that He alone atoned for our sins, that He was carrying us even when we thought He had abandoned us. When we stand before Him and see the wounds in His hands and feet, we will begin to comprehend what it meant for Him to bear our sins and be acquainted with grief, to be completely obedient to the will of His Father—all out of pure love for us. To introduce others to faith, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and receiving our blessings in the house of the Lord—these are the fundamental “principles and ordinances” that ultimately reveal our love of God and neighbor and joyfully characterize the true Church of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I testify that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the vehicle God has provided for our exaltation. The gospel it teaches is true, and the priesthood legitimizing it is not derivative. I testify that Russell M. Nelson is a prophet of our God, as His predecessors were and as His successors will be. And one day that prophetic guidance will lead a generation to see our Messenger of Salvation descend like “lightning ... out of the east,” and we will exclaim, “Jesus of Nazareth.” With arms forever outstretched and love unfeigned, He will reply, “I am he.” I so promise with the apostolic power and authority of His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

utvivlsomt vil være en del af den, holder vi kursen i Kristi sande kirke. Hvorfor? For ligesom vor Forløser, tilmeldte vi os hele semestret – der ikke slutter efter en kort indledende quiz, men fortsætter til den afsluttende eksamen. Glæden ved det er, at rektoren gav os adgang til hjælpemidlerne med alle svarene, inden kurset begyndte. Desuden har vi et hav af undervisere, der regelmæssigt minder os om disse svar hen ad livets vej. Men selvfølgelig fungerer intet af det, hvis vi bliver ved med at pjække fra undervisningen.

»Hvem leder I efter?« Af hele hjertet svarer vi: »Jesus fra Nazaret.« Når han siger: »Det er mig«, bøjer vi vores knæ og bekender med vores tunge, at han er den levende Kristus, at han alene sonede for vores synder, at han bar os, selv da vi troede, at han havde forladt os. Når vi står foran ham og ser mærkerne i hans hænder og fødder, vil vi begynde at forstå, hvad det betød for ham at bære vores synder og være bekendt med sorg, at være fuldstændig lydighedsmod sin Faders vilje – alt sammen ud af en ren kærlighed til os. At præsentere andre for tro, omvendelse, dåb, Helligåndsgaven og modtagelse af vores velsignelser i Herrens hus – er alle fundamentale »principper og ordinancer«, der i sidste ende afslører vores kærlighed til Gud og vores næste, og karakteriserer Kristi sande Kirke.

Brødre og søstre, jeg vidner om, at Jesu Kristi Kirke af Sidste Dages Hellige er det middel, som Gud har stillet til rådighed for vores ophøjelse. Det evangelium, den forkynnder, er sandt, og det præstedømme, der legitimerer den, stammer direkte fra Gud. Jeg vidner om, at Russell M. Nelson er Guds profet, akkurat som hans forgængere var og hans efterfølgere vil være. Og en dag vil denne profetiske vejledning lede til, at en generation vil se vor frelses Sendebud stige ned »som lynet ... fra øst«, og vi vil udbryde: »Jesus fra Nazaret.« Med vidtåbne arme og uforstilt kærlighed vil han svare: »Det er mig.« Det lover jeg med apostolsk kraft og myndighed i hans hellige navn, ja, Jesu Kristi navn. Amen.