

Embrace the Lord's Gift of Repentance

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Kumbatia Zawadi ya Bwana ya Toba

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Wa Sabini

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Let us not wait for things to get hard before turning to God. Let us not wait until the end of our mortal lives to truly repent.

I testify of a loving Heavenly Father. In the April 2019 general conference, moments after I was sustained in my new responsibility as a General Authority Seventy, the choir sang a rendition of “I Stand All Amazed” that pierced my heart and soul.

I marvel that he would descend from his throne divine

To rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine,

That he should extend his great love unto such as I,

Sufficient to own, to redeem, and to justify.

As I heard those words, I was all amazed. I felt that despite my inadequacies and flaws, the Lord blessed me to know that “in his strength I can do all things.”

The common feeling of inadequacy, weakness, or even unworthiness is something with which many of us sometimes struggle. I still struggle with this; I felt it the day I was called. I have felt it many times, and I still feel it right now speaking to you. However, I have learned that I am not alone with these feelings. In fact, there are many accounts in the scriptures of those who seem to have felt similar feelings. For example, we remember Nephi as a faithful and valiant servant of the Lord. At times, even he struggled with feelings of unworthiness, weakness, and inadequacy.

He said: “Notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord, in showing me his great and

Acha tusingojee mambo yawe magumu ndipo tumgeukie Mungu. Acha tusingojee mwisho wa maisha yetu duniani ndiyo tutubu kweli.

Ninashuhudia juu ya Baba wa Mbinguni mwenye upendo. Katika mkutano mkuu wa Aprili 2019, muda baada ya kukubaliwa katika jukumu langu jipya kama Kiongozi mwenye Mamlaka wa Sabini, kwaya iliimba wimbo wa “Nastaajabu” ambao ulipenya moyo na nafsi yangu.

Nashangaa kwamba angeweza kushuka kuto-ka kwenye kiti cha enzi cha kiungu

Kuokoa nafsi kiburi kama yangu,

Kwamba upendo wake angenionesha,

Kunikomboa, hata kunihalalisha.”

Niliposikia maneno hayo, nilishangaa sana. Nilihisi kwamba licha ya mapungufu na kasoro zangu, Bwana alinibariki kujua kwamba “katika nguvu zake naweza kufanya mambo yote.”

Hisia ya kawaida ya mapungufu, udhaifu au hata kutostahili ni jambo ambalo wengi wetu wakati mwingine hupambana nalo. Mimi bado napambana nalo; nilihisi hivo siku niliyoitwa. Nimehisi hivyo mara nyingi na bado ninahisi hivyo sasa ninapozungumza nanyi. Hata hivyo, nimejifunza kwamba sio mimi pekee niliye na hisia hizi. Kwa kweli, kuna masimulizi mengi katika maandiko ya wale ambao wanaonekana kuhisi hisia kama hizo. Kwa mfano, tunamkumbuka Nefi mtumishi mwaminifu na shujaa wa Bwana. Nyakati fulani, hata yeye alipambana na hisia za kutostahili, udhaifu na mapungufu.

Alisema: “ingawa Bwana ana wema mkubwa, hata kunionyesha kazi yake kuu na ya maajabu,

marvelous works, my heart exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am! Yea, my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.”

The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke of often feeling “condemned,” in his youth, “for [his] weakness and imperfections.” But Joseph’s feelings of inadequacy and worry were part of what led him to ponder, study, learn, and pray. As you may remember, he went to pray in the grove near his home to find truth, peace, and forgiveness. He heard the Lord say: “Joseph, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way, walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments. Behold, I am the Lord of Glory. I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have eternal life.”

Joseph’s sincere desire to repent and seek the salvation of his soul helped him come to Jesus Christ and receive forgiveness of his sins. This continuous effort opened the door to the continuing Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This remarkable experience of the Prophet Joseph Smith illustrates how feelings of weakness and inadequacy can help us recognize our fallen nature. If we are humble, this will help us come to recognize our dependence upon Jesus Christ and stir within our hearts a sincere desire to turn to the Savior and repent of our sins.

My friends, repentance is joy! Sweet repentance is part of a daily process through which, “line upon line, precept upon precept,” the Lord teaches us to live a life centered in His teachings. Like Joseph and Nephi, we can “cry unto [God] for mercy; for he is mighty to save.” He can fulfill any righteous desire or longing and can heal any wound in our lives.

In the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, you and I can find countless accounts of individuals who learned how to come unto Christ through sincere repentance.

I’d like to share with you an example of the tender mercies of the Lord through an experience that occurred in my beloved home island of Puerto Rico.

It was in my hometown of Ponce that a sister

moyo wangu unalia: Ewe mimi mtu mwovu! Ndiyo, moyo wangu unahuzunishwa kwa sababu ya mwili wangu; moyo wangu unahofishwa na dhambi zangu.”

Nabii Joseph Smith alizungumza kuhusu “mara nyingi [alihisi] kulaumiwa kwa udhaifu [wake] na kutokamilika.” Lakini hisia za Joseph za mapungufu na wasiwasi zilikuwa sehemu ya mambo yaliyomsababisha kutafakari, kusoma, kujifunza na kusali. Kama unavyoweza kukumbuka, alienda kusali kwenye kisitu karibu na nyumba yake ili kupata ukweli, amani na msamaha. Alimsikia Bwana akimwambia, “Joseph, mwanangu, umesamehewa dhambi zako. Enenda zako, enenda katika hukumu zangu, na ukazishike amri zangu. Tazama, mimi ni Bwana wa Utukufu. Nilisulubiwa kwa ajili ya ulimwengu ili wote watakaoliamini jina langu waweze kupata uzima wa milele.”

Tamaa ya dhati ya Joseph ya kutubu na kutafuta wokovu wa nafsi yake ilimsaidia kuja kwa Yesu Kristo na kupokea msamaha wa dhambi zake. Hizi juhudi endelevu zilifungua mlango wa Urejesho unaoendelea wa injili ya Yesu Kristo.

Uzoefu huu wa ajabu wa Nabii Joseph Smith unaonyesha jinsi hisia za udhaifu na kutofaa zinaweza kutusaidia kutambua asili yetu ya kuanzika. Kama sisi ni wanyenyekevu, hii itatusaidia kuja kutambua kumtegemea Yesu Kristo na kuchochea ndani ya mioyo yetu hamu ya dhati ya kumgeukia Mwokozi kwa kusudi kamili na kutubu dhambi zetu.

Marafiki zangu, toba ni shangwe! Toba tamu ni sehemu ya mchakato wa kila siku ambapo kupitia, “mstari juu ya mstari, kanuni juu ya kanuni,” Bwana hutufundisha kuishi maisha ambayo kitovu chake ni mafundisho Yake. Kama Joseph na Nefi, tunaweza “kumlilia [Mungu] ili tupate rehema; kwa maana ana uwezo wa kuokoa.” Yeye anaweza kutimiza tamaa au hamu yoyote ya haki na anaweza kuponya jeraha lolote maishani mwetu.

Kitabu cha Mormoni: Ushuhuda Mwingine wa Yesu Kristo, mimi na wewe tunaweza kupata simulizi zisizo na idadi za watu ambao walijifunza jinsi ya kuja kwa Yesu Kristo kupitia toba ya kweli.

Ningependa kushiriki nanyi mfano wa rehema nyororo za Bwana kupitia uzoefu ambao ulitokea katika kisiwa pendwa cha nyumbani kwangu cha Puerto Rico

Ilikuwa katika mji wangu wa Ponce ambapo

in the Church, Célia Cruz Ayala, decided that she was going to give a Book of Mormon to a friend. She wrapped it and went to deliver this gift, more precious to her than diamonds or rubies, she said. On her way, a thief approached her, grabbed her purse, and ran away with the special gift inside.

When she told this story at church, her friend said, “Who knows? Maybe this was your opportunity to share the gospel!”

Well, a few days later, do you know what happened? Célia received a letter. I hold that letter, which Célia shared with me, in my hand today. It says:

“Mrs. Cruz:

“Forgive me, forgive me. You will never know how sorry I am for attacking you. But because of it, my life has changed and will continue to change.

“That book [the Book of Mormon] has helped me in my life. The dream of that man of God has shaken me. ... I am returning your five [dollars,] for I can’t spend them. I want you to know that you seemed to have a radiance about you. That light seemed to stop me [from harming you, so] I ran away instead.

“I want you to know that you will see me again, but when you do, you won’t recognize me, for I will be your brother. ... Here, where I live, I have to find the Lord and go to the church you belong to.

“The message you wrote in that book brought tears to my eyes. Since Wednesday night I have not been able to stop reading it. I have prayed and asked God to forgive me [and] I ask you to forgive me. ... I thought your wrapped gift was something I could sell. [Instead,] it has made me want to [change] my life. ... Forgive me, forgive me, I beg you.

“Your absent friend.”

Brothers and sisters, the light of the Savior can reach us all, no matter our circumstances. “It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines,” said President Jeffrey R. Holland.

As for the unintended recipient of Célia’s gift, the Book of Mormon, this brother went on to witness more of the Lord’s mercy. Although it took time for this brother to forgive himself, he found joy in repentance. What a miracle! One faithful sister, one Book of Mormon, sincere repentance, and the Savior’s power led to the enjoy-

dada Kanisani, Célia Cruz Ayala, aliamua kwam-ba angeenda kumpa rafiki yake Kitabu cha Mor-moni. Alikifunga na kwenda kupeleka zawadi hii, yenye thamani zaidi kwake kuliko almasi au rubi, yeye alisema. Akiwa njiani, mwizi mmoja alim-sogelea, akakwapua mkoba wake na kukimbia na zawadi hiyo maalumu ndani ya mkoba.

Aliposimulia hadithi hii kanisani, rafiki yake alisema, “Nani anajua? Labda hii ilikuwa fursa yako kushiriki injili!”

Ndiyo, siku chache baadaye, unajua nini kil-itokea? Célia alipokea barua. Ninashikilia barua hiyo ambayo Célia alishiriki na mimi, mkononi mwangu leo. Inasema:

“Bi. Cruz:

“Nisamehe, nisamehe. Huwezijua jinsi ninavyosikitika kwa kukushambulia. Lakini kwa sababu ya hilo, maisha yangu yamebadilika na yataendelea kubadilika.

“Kitabu hicho [Kitabu cha Mormoni] ki-menisaidia katika maisha yangu. Ndoto ya huyo mtu wa Mungu imenitikisa. ... Ninakurudishia [dola] zako tano, kwa maana siwezi kuzitumia. Nataka ujue kuwa ulionekana kuwa na mng’ao juu yako. Nuru hiyo ilionekana kunizuia [nisi-kudhuru, kwa hivyo] badala yake nilikimbia.

“Nataka ujue kwamba utaniona tena, lak-ini utakaponiona, hutanitambua, kwa maana nitakuwa kaka yako. ... Hapa, ninapoishi, sina budi kumtafuta Bwana na kwenda kwenye kanisa ambalo wewe ni sehemu ya.

“Ujumbe ulioandika katika kitabu hicho umenitoa machozi. Tangu Jumatano usiku sijaweza kuacha kuusoma. Nimesali na kum-womba Mungu anisamehe, [na] ninakuomba unisamehe. ... Nilidhani zawadi yako iliyofunik-wa ni kitu ninachoweza kuuza. [Badala yake,] imenifanya nitake [kubadilisha] maisha yangu. Nisamehe, nisamehe, nakuomba.

“Wako, rafiki mtoro.”

Akina kaka na akina dada, nuru ya Mwokozi inaweza kutufikia sote, bila kujali hali zetu. “Hai-wezekani kwa wewe kuzama chini zaidi ya pale nuru isiyo na mwisho ya Upatanisho wa Kristo inapoangaza,” alisema Rais Jeffrey R. Holland.

Kwa mpokeaji asiye tarajiwa wa zawadi ya Célia, ya Kitabu cha Mormoni, kaka huyu alien-delea kushuhudia zaidi juu rehema za Bwana. In-gawa ilichukua muda kwa kaka huyo kujisamehe, alipata shangwe katika toba. Ni muujiza ulioje! Dada mmoja mwaminifu, Kitabu cha Mormoni kimoja, toba ya dhati, na nguvu za Mwokozi

ment of the fulness of blessings of the gospel and sacred covenants in the house of the Lord. Other family members followed and accepted sacred responsibilities in the Lord's vineyard, including full-time missionary service.

As we come unto Jesus Christ, our path of sincere repentance will eventually lead us to the Savior's holy temple.

What a righteous motive to strive to be clean—to be worthy of the fulness of the blessings made possible by our Heavenly Father and His Son through sacred temple covenants! Serving regularly in the house of the Lord and striving to keep the sacred covenants we make there will increase both our desire and our ability to experience the change of heart, might, mind, and soul necessary for us to become more like our Savior. President Russell M. Nelson has testified: "Nothing will open the heavens more [than worshipping in the temple]. Nothing!"

My dear friends, do you feel inadequate? Do you feel unworthy? Are you second-guessing yourself? Perhaps you might worry and ask: Do I measure up? Is it too late for me? Why do I keep failing when I am trying my absolute best?

Brothers and sisters, surely we will make mistakes in our lives along the way. But please remember that, as Elder Gerrit W. Gong has taught: "Our Savior's Atonement is infinite and eternal. Each of us strays and falls short. We may, for a time, lose our way. God lovingly assures us [that] no matter where we are or what we have done, there is no point of no return. He waits ready to embrace us."

As my dear wife, Cari Lu, has also taught me, we all need to repent, rewind, and reset the time to "zero o'clock" every single day.

Obstacles will come. Let us not wait for things to get hard before turning to God. Let us not wait until the end of our mortal lives to truly repent. Instead, let us now, no matter which part of the covenant path we are on, focus on the redemptive power of Jesus Christ and on Heavenly Father's desire for us to return to Him.

The Lord's house, His holy scriptures, His holy prophets and apostles inspire us to strive

viliongoza kwenye furaha ya utimilifu wa baraka za injili na maagano matakatiifu katika nyumba ya Bwana. Wanafamilia wengine walifuata na kukubali majukumu katika shamba la mzeituni la Bwana, ikijumuisha huduma ya umisionari.

Tunapokuja kwa Yesu Kristo, njia yetu ya toba ya dhati hatimaye itatupeleka kwenye hekalu takatifu la Mwokozi.

Ni nia njema iliyoje ya kujitahidi kuwa msa-fi—kustahili utimilifu wa baraka zilizowezeshwa na Baba yetu wa Mbinguni na Mwanawe kupitia maagano matakatiifu ya hekaluni! Kuhudumu mara kwa mara katika nyumba ya Bwana na kujitahidi kushika maagano matakatiifu tunayofanya huko kutaongeza hamu yetu na uwezo wetu wa kupata mabadiliko ya moyo, uwezo, akili na nafsi vilivyo muhimu kwetu kuwa zaidi kama Mwokozi wetu. Rais Russell M. Nelson ameshuhudia: "Hakuna cho chote kitakachofungua mbinguzaidi [kuliko kuabudu hekaluni]. Hakuna cho chote!"

Rafiki zangu wapendwa, je, mnajiona kuwa hamtoshi? Je, unahisi hustahili? Je, una jishuku wewe mwenyewe? Labda unaweza kuwa na wasi-wasi na kujiuliza: Je ninatosha! Je, nimechelewa sana? Kwa nini naendelea kushindwa wakati ninajaribu kwa kadiri niwezavyo?

Akina kaka na akina dada, hakika tutafanya makosa katika maisha yetu tukiwa njiani. Lakini tafadhali kumbuka kwamba, kama Mzee Gerrit W. Gong alivyofundisha: "Upatanisho wa Mwokozi wetu hauna kikomo na ni wa milele. Kila mmoja wetu hupotoka na kupungukiwa. Tunaweza, kwa muda, kupotea njia. Mungu kwa upendo anatuhakikishia [kwamba] licha ya pale tulipo au kile tulichokifanya, hakuna mahali ambapo hatuwezi kurudi. Yeye anasubiri kwa utayari kutukumbatia."

Mke wangu mpendwa, Cari Lu, pia ameni-fundisha, sisi sote tunahitaji kutubu, kurudisha wakati nyuma na kuweka upya muda wetu kwenye "saa sifuri" kila siku.

Vikwazo vitakuja. Acha tusingojee mambo yawe magumu ndipo tumgeukie Mungu. Acha tusingojee mpaka mwisho wa maisha yetu duniani ndiyo tutubu kwa dhati. Badala yake, hebu sasa, bila kujali ni sehemu gani ya njia ya agano tuliyo, tuzingatia nguvu za ukombozi za Yesu Kristo na juu ya hamu ya Baba wa Mbinguni kwetu ya sisi kurudi Kwake.

Nyumba ya Bwana, maandiko Yake matakatiifu, manabii na mitume Wake watakatiifu hut-

towards personal holiness through the doctrine of Christ.

And Nephi said: "And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man [and woman] can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Our process of "at-one-ment" with God may feel challenging. But you and I can pause, be still, look to the Savior, and seek to find and act on what He would have us change. If we do so with full intent, we will witness His healing. And think of how our posterity will be blessed as we embrace the Lord's gift of repentance!

The Master Potter, taught my dad, will mold and refine us, which can be difficult. Nonetheless, the Master Healer will also cleanse us. I have experienced and continue to experience that healing power. I testify that it comes through faith in Jesus Christ and daily repentance.

Oh, it is wonderful that he should care for me

Enough to die for me!

I testify of God's love and of the infinite power of His Son's Atonement. We can feel it profoundly as we sincerely and wholeheartedly repent.

My friends, I am a witness of the glorious Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith and the current divine guidance of the Savior through His prophet and mouthpiece, President Russell M. Nelson. I know Jesus Christ lives and that He is the Master Healer of our souls. I know and I testify that these things are true, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.

upatia msukumo wa kujitahidi kusonga kuelekea utakatifu binafsi kupitia mafundisho ya Kristo.

Na Nefi akasema: "Na sasa, tazama, ndugu zangu wapendwa, hii ndiyo njia; na hakuna njia nyingine wala jina lililotolewa chini ya mbingu ambalo mwanaume [na mwanamke] anaweza kuokolewa katika ufalme wa Mungu. Na sasa, tazama, hili ndilo fundisho la Kristo, na fundisho pekee na la kweli la Baba, na la Mwana, na la Roho Mtakatifu."

Mchakato wetu wa "upa-ta-nisho" na Mungu unaweza kuonekana kuwa wenye changamoto. Lakini mimi na wewe tunaweza kusimama, kutulia, na kumtegemea Mwokozi, na kutafuta na kutenda juu ya kile ambacho Yeye angetaka sisi tubadilishe. Ikiwa tutafanya hivyo kwa nia kamili, tutashuhudia uponyaji Wake. Na fikiria ni jinsi gani uzao wetu watabarikiwa tunapokumbatia zawadi ya Bwana ya toba!

Mfanyanzi Mkuu alimfundisha baba yangu, kwa kielezo na kutusafisha, ambavyo inaweza kuwa vigumu. Hata hivyo, Mponyaji Mkuu pia atatusafisha. Nimepata uzoefu huo na ninaendelea kupata nguvu hiyo ya uponyaji. Ninashuhudia kwamba nguvu hiyo huja kupitia imani katika Yesu Kristo na toba ya kila siku.

Ni ajabu kwangu angenithamini

Kiasi cha kufa!"

Ninashuhudia juu ya upendo wa Mungu na uwezo usio na kikomo wa Upatanisho wa Mwanawe. Tunaweza kuhisi kwa kina tunapotubu kwa dhati na kwa moyo wote.

Rafiki zangu, mimi ni shahidi wa Urejesho mtukufu wa injili kupitia Nabii Joseph Smith na mwongozo wa kiungu wa sasa wa Mwokozi kupitia nabii na mnenaji Wake, Rais Russell M. Nelson. Ninajua Yesu Kristo yu hai na kwamba Yeye ni Mponyaji Mkuu wa nafsi zetu. Ninajua na kushuhudia kwamba mambo haya ni ya kweli, Katika jina takatifu la Yesu Kristo, amina.