

Dick Johnson's July 12th Sacrament Meeting talk on The Priesthood

1. Introduction

- a. Thank Elder Marshall Ringwood, Br. Spendove, and the music people.
- b. I miss coming. I'm in the High Council and It is unsettling for me to not be here regularly.
- c. I am also the high council representative at the Wentworh. On Father's Day, Bro Stokoe and Sis Thomas and members of the Primary sang at the Wentworth. You should have seen the faces of those residents.

2.



- a. The topic is *The Priesthood*.
 - i. I have prayed to know how to present this material to you.

- ii. I had thought at first to teach as though this were an introductory priesthood lesson and invite the sisters and Primary children to listen in. I was going ...
 1. To describe the priesthood in general (Section 107)
 2. Then describe how it works at the stake and ward level—who holds keys.
 3. Then describe the characteristics of the ‘ideal’ priesthood holder.
 4. I wanted to talk to the Aaronic Priesthood holders about the high and holy assignment they have to administer the sacrament each Sunday.
 - a. Elder Perry’s last advice: I wish I could get every member of the Church to go and partake of the sacrament, and when they look at the bread, they’d ask themselves, ‘Who am I? What am I doing? How am I living? Where am I going? What should I be accomplishing?’ as they renew their covenants with the Lord.” He finished. “The minute they’d pick up the bread, something would happen.”
 - iii. But, the talk got too big, too complex.
 - iv. Instead, I will tell you some priesthood related stories.
- b. My hope is that some man, or woman, or child will find something in what I say, or what the Holy Ghost communicates, that will affect his or her perspective about the priesthood.
 - c. Let’s start with the end in mind: Elder Holland’s October, 2012 talk on the First Great Commandment.
 - i. Remember this please—the more correct name for the Melchizedek Priesthood is, *The Holy Priesthood, after the order of the Son of God.*

- ii. You might remember E. Holland’s talk. He was speaking to the priesthood leaders he had commanded to take the gospel into all the world.

After the resurrection, and during the 40 days of post-resurrection visits and teachings by the Savior, Peter and some of the other apostles returned to their previous occupation—fishing. After an unsuccessful night, they got the invitation from the stranger on the shore to cast their nets on the right side of the boat John records the detail that the catch was 153 fishes.

Then came the invitation to come to shore and eat. (Elder Holland takes a little liberty with the scriptures from here on.) After eating Jesus said to His senior Apostle, “Peter, do you love me more than you love all this?” Peter said, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

Three times the question is asked and answered. “Lord, ... thou knowest that I love thee.”

Elder Holland expands the dialogue, “If you love me then Peter, why are you here? Why are we back on this same shore, by these same nets, having this same conversation? Wasn’t it obvious then and isn’t it obvious now that if I want fish, I can get fish? What I need, Peter, are disciples—and I need them forever. I need someone to feed my sheep and save my lambs. I need someone to preach my gospel and defend my faith.

My beloved brothers and sisters, I am not certain just what our experience will be on Judgment Day, but I will be very surprised if at some point in that conversation, God does not ask us exactly what Christ asked Peter: “Did you love me?”

I testify from the bottom of my heart, with the intensity of my soul, to all who can hear my voice that those apostolic keys have been restored to the earth, and they are found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints. To those who have not yet joined with us in this great final cause of Christ, we say, "Please come."

To those who were once with us but have retreated, preferring to pick and choose a few cultural hors d'oeuvres from the smorgasbord of the Restoration and leave the rest of the feast, I say that I fear you face a lot of long nights and empty nets. The call is to come back, to stay true, to love God, and to lend a hand. I include in that call to fixed faithfulness every returned missionary who ever stood in a baptismal font and with arm to the square said, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ."

That commission was to have changed your convert forever, but it was surely supposed to have changed you forever as well. To the youth of the Church rising up to missions and temples and marriage, we say: "Love God and remain clean from the blood and sins of this generation. You have a monumental work to do... Your Father in Heaven expects your loyalty and your love at every stage of your life."



Some general notes about the priesthood.

- d. It is the eternal power and authority of God, the delegation of which allows worthy men to act in God's name for the salvation of mankind.
- e. A priesthood holder is expected to exercise this sacred authority in accordance with God's holy mind, will, and purposes. Nothing about the priesthood is self-centered.
- f. The priesthood is always used to serve, to bless, and to strengthen other people.
 - i. No normal thinking man seeks for offices in the priesthood. He accepts callings and releases with equal willingness, but never seeks for office or status related to the priesthood offices.
- g. The priesthood is not the men who hold it. It is without beginning of days or end of years.
- h. To have order in the Kingdom the proper operation of the priesthood requires the delegation from God to His Prophet of keys and their use. For most of us our principle key-holder is the Bishop; for some the Stake President.

3. Some stories from general authorities.

- a. I would like to tell you something that I have learned about General Authorities:
 - i. It is one thing to be a bishop, another to be a stake president, another to be an Area Seventy, and quite another to be called as a GA. These are the First Presidency, the Twelve, The Presidency of the Seventy, the First and Second Quorums of the Seventy, and the Presiding Bishopric.
 - ii. They give themselves wholly to God's service and range across the world, teaching, inspiring, leading, correcting, and exercising their keys for the salvation of mankind everywhere.
 - iii. Sr. Johnson and I worked daily with four of them when we were in Moscow. We learned to pay attention when one

of them spoke. They are bright and thoughtful, deep thinkers.

- iv. Pres. Schwitzer, "remission of sins."
- v. Elder Packer stories. Some of you may not know that his home is just a mile, or so, to the NW of us. His home used to be in our stake.
 - 1. Elder Snow and what I came to call the incident with the clown suits.

Dick,

I have looked to see if I had written down that little learning experience, but can't find it so I thought I should write it down now and share it with you.

"In 1975 when I was the new bishop of the 3rd ward (my input, more likely the Union 15th ward, which evolved into the WC 3rd ward) of the Willow Creek Stake, and at 31 years old was still very wet behind the ears, David Sperry and Leonard Shurtleff were my counselors. We had not been serving long at the time of this little learning experience.

We were just finishing an early morning bishopric meeting and anticipated the upcoming sacrament meeting, so I stepped outside the office and checked on the chapel to make sure we were ready. As I peeked inside I saw that there was no one in the chapel except Elder Packer, sitting quietly on the stand waiting. I bounded up to the stand and introduced myself and asked how he would like us to proceed. He said that he would be glad to speak to the congregation that day and I assured him we were pleased and would make arrangements to do just that.

At that point David and Leonard came in to see what was keeping me and I introduced Elder Packer to my counselors.

The meeting began well enough and at the appointed time Elder Packer arose and began to speak about his recent experience as the mission president in the Boston Mission. He talked about what it was like in the "mission field" and how new converts were routinely pressed into service and that it was important to help them gain an understanding of some of the unwritten order of things in priesthood leadership.

He mentioned several examples, and then told of a new district president who was called. The man had very little prior experience, so Elder Packer described how he led him through some of the basics, including how to dress appropriately when doing the work of the priesthood, including the desirability to wear a white shirt and tie and a conservative dark suit. He was describing how the man responded graciously and eagerly to this instruction when I looked down at the light tan suit I was wearing and noticed David sinking lower in his seat in order to hide the light green dress shirt he was wearing. It was only then that I noticed Leonard tugging on his pants to hide the white socks he had on.

Elder Packer continued on with his talk while the three of us struggled mightily on the stand, fully aware that we were Exhibit A of his object lesson and in full view of an otherwise enthralled congregation.

The three of us got the message and never again dressed in anything but dark suit and tie when doing the work of the priesthood. In the end, we needed the lesson: Among the three of us we served as mission presidents six times, David became the stake president (later the stake patriarch), Leonard became an MTC President, and I ended up wearing a suit more than I planned for the rest of my life."

2. Elder Neuenschwander found Elder Packer willing to be his mentor. Elder N. prayed to be teachable.

4. Some personal priesthood stories:
 - a. Panguitch. Hwy 89 from the south and east ... April, 2002. The deacon and the widow.
 - b. The Ogden temple dedication.

The stake presidency and the bishop at the dedication of the Ogden Temple in September, 2014.

I know something about these men and their callings.

I know the stake presidency (was there at the beginning) and am coming to know your bishop.

Their callings are unsought for, require great sacrifice, and not just for the father, but his family as well, and these callings are sometimes very lonely experiences.

5. Application.
 - a. The ideal priesthood holder:

D&C 121: 36 ... the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

41 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

45 Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

- b. Who can provide such examples for us?
 - i. The prophet?
 - ii. The stake president?
 - iii. The bishop?
 - iv. There is no reason it cannot be your quorum president, your home teacher, your father, for those who hold the priesthood--yourself.
 - v. Pres. Benson, "The father must hunger and thirst and yearn to bless his family, go to the Lord, ponder the words of the Lord, and live by the Spirit to know the mind and will of the Lord and what he must do to lead his family. [Fathers,] have a sacred responsibility to provide spiritual leadership in your family."

6. Summary and testimony.

- a. Can we answer the Savior's question, "Do you love me?"
- b. If not, what might you do to make it so?
- c. The Church is true. The holy priesthood is restored.

D&C 84:19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

- d. The ordinances of the priesthood are administered by ordinary men, doing extra ordinary things. To be effective they must be worthy, kind, loving, charitable, pure and good.