

# LIGHT REFLECTIONS

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## Saying Grace

A decade ago, I watched our six-year-old daughter (now sixteen) devour a watermelon with unmitigated relish. She gobbled slice after slice down to the narrowest strip of green. I later tried to capture the moment in a sprightly little poem:

### *The Watermelon Eater*

*Grab my slice greedily,  
Munch my slice speedily,  
Slurp my slice heedlessly,  
O what a find!*

*Teeth chomp a thunderous din,  
Juice stains my cheeks and chin,  
Twice paradise I'm in  
Sucking the rind.*

It is a towering Restoration truth that God delights in our delight. He lovingly crafted the earth and all created things not only for our “benefit and . . . use,” but also “to please the eye and to gladden the heart . . . to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul” (D&C 59:18-19). Our Lord is committed to aesthetics as well as utility, form as well as function, enjoyment as well as edification.

“If you want to enjoy exquisitely,” advised our namesake, Brigham Young, “become a Latter-day Saint, and . . . live the doctrine of Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

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G.K. Chesterton was not a Latter-day Saint, but he did enjoy exquisitely. His prose and poems pulsate with delight in the quotidian—in a piece of chalk or the contents of his pocket, in “penny-dreadful” novels or chasing after his hat.<sup>2</sup>

Chesterton inhabited a world of “tremendous trifles”<sup>3</sup> and “street[s] full of splendid strangers.”<sup>4</sup>

“You say grace before meals,” Chesterton wrote.

*All right.  
But I say grace before the concert and the opera,  
And grace before the play and pantomime,  
And grace before I open a book,  
And grace before sketching, painting,  
Swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing,  
dancing;  
And grace before I dip the pen in the ink.*<sup>5</sup>

We follow a similar pattern at BYU, praying before gatherings of every conceivable kind. Many of you say grace in the lab and grace in the library, grace at your laptop and grace at the lectern.

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Gratitude, said President Russell M. Nelson, “is a fast-acting and long-lasting spiritual prescription,” one that fosters revelation and invites miracles.<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes, when we talk of gratitude, we stress seeing the proverbial glass as half-full rather than half-empty. I once sat in a class where gratitude was discussed in precisely these terms.

Somewhat cynically, I wondered as I listened whether gratitude were just a psychological trick. As a factual matter, I reasoned, the glass is *both* half-empty *and* half-full. It does *not* depend on how you look at it. I could see the practical benefits of deeming the glass half-full. But it troubled me to think of gratitude as a merely pragmatic act of will. By willfully focusing on the portion half-full, are we not willfully blind to the portion half-empty?

As I sat thinking along these lines—thinking, you might say, like a lawyer—it struck me with the force of revelation that the only glass that ultimately matters is neither half-full nor half-empty. It is filled to overflowing.

*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. . . .*

*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . .*

*. . . [T]hanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [1 Corinthians 15:19-20, 55, 57]*

The cup is not half-empty because the tomb is empty indeed.

In the end, the colossal, cosmic fact of Christ's Resurrection overwhelms all other considerations. All mortal adversity is finally swallowed, with death, in Christ's victory over death. All mortal

graces unite in the ultimate grace of the Savior's universal gift. Gratitude flows from that gift into all circumstances. It is the product, not of willful blindness, but of infinite vision.

The revelations promise that those “who [receive] all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto [them], even an hundred fold, yea, more” (D&C 78:19).

We have much for which to give thanks—including, in my case, the blessing of learning and laboring at this special school with incomparable colleagues like you.

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<sup>1</sup> *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997) 185.

<sup>2</sup> Chesterton's essays “A Piece of Chalk,” “What I Found in My Pocket,” and “On Running After One's Hat” are reprinted in Dale Ahlquist et al (eds), *In Defense of Sanity: The Best Essays of G.K. Chesterton* (Ignatius Press, 2011). His essay “In Defense of Penny Dreadfuls” can be found in John Gross (ed), *The Oxford Book of Essays* (Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> *Tremendous Trifles* is the title of Chesterton's essay collection published in 1909.

<sup>4</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (John Lane, 1908) 35.

<sup>5</sup> G.K. Chesterton, “A Grace,” in *G.K. Chesterton: Collected Works*, Volume 10: Collected Poetry, Part 1 (Ignatius Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “The Healing Power of Gratitude,” November 2020, [https://assets.ldscdn.org/ac/ce/acce1d6a5b114c8c6eb33605830000a4176eb859/prayer\\_of\\_gratitude\\_video\\_and\\_awareness\\_materials.pdf](https://assets.ldscdn.org/ac/ce/acce1d6a5b114c8c6eb33605830000a4176eb859/prayer_of_gratitude_video_and_awareness_materials.pdf).