

LIGHT REFLECTIONS

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Not One Cloud

In one of our greatest Easter anthems—indeed, one of the greatest of all Christian hymns—we sing this stirring profession of faith:

Come with high and holy hymning;

Chant our Lord's triumphant lay.

Not one darksome cloud is dimming

Yonder glorious morning ray[.]¹

These words provided my Easter motto this year: “Not one cloud.” I hoped to remember that there is no cloud of darkness—no shade of night, no gloom by day—that can withstand the all-conquering light of our triumphant, risen Lord.

I chose this motto not least because for me the winter of 2023-2024 has seemed to have clouds aplenty—some material, some metaphorical. I'm not sure that I've ever looked forward so eagerly to Easter and to spring, nature's sacred symbol of renewal and rebirth.

At one discouraging point this winter, I was invited to be the keynote speaker at the annual conference of our campus organization for staff and administrative employees—Office Professionals Across Campus (OPAC). This proved to be one of heaven's gently ironic blessings: the theme of their conference was “There is hope smiling brightly before us.”

In the weeks before the conference, I tried to read landmark talks about hope and to review scriptures that mention hope. Two major impressions emerged from my modest studies.

First, prophetic definitions of hope uniformly focus on God's promises. Hope is living in the presence of the Lord's promises; it is looking

forward with an eye of faith to see those promises fulfilled.

Second, scriptures about hope—especially in the Book of Mormon—repeatedly link this heavenly virtue to the Savior's resurrection. “And what is it that ye shall hope for?” Mormon asks. “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto eternal life, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise” (Moro. 7:41).

For me these two observations are both reflected in the Savior's conversation with Martha just before He raised Lazarus from death.

In that account, as soon as Jesus arrives in Bethany, Martha greets Him with both an expression of faith and a hint of reproof: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Martha then adds an implicit request to her implicit reproach: “But I know,” she says, “that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”

Jesus answers with a striking but ambiguous promise: “Thy brother shall rise again.” He doesn't say whether Lazarus will return to mortal life imminently or rise in immortality on resurrection morn. Martha cautiously gestures toward the latter: “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Then, in what for me is the climax of the account—in words that thunder through my heart and thrill my very soul—Jesus reminds Martha that He is the Lord God of the present tense. “*I am* the resurrection, and the life,” He declares: “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth

in me shall never die” (John 11:21-26; emphasis added).

Premortally, His name was Jehovah—the Great I AM. His word is truth, and His promises are sure. Although we must sometimes wait for the future fulfilment of those promises, the gift of hope allows us to experience the power of those promises in the present tense. “*I am* the resurrection,” he promised—even before the resurrection.

A few weeks ago, just after climbing into bed for the night, I felt a strong impression that former BYU employees who have passed beyond the veil were aware of me and were praying for me. I sensed that those who have gone before us—those who consecrated their life’s labors to helping BYU become the school of prophecy and promise—were now doing everything in their power to help us bring those promises to pass.

Between the Friday of His crucifixion and the morning of the first Easter, the Savior went to the spirit world where “he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority” (D&C 138:30). I believe that some of

those forces and some of those messengers are at work on our behalf, helping to advance the mission and cause that we and they hold sacred.

“In the gospel of Jesus Christ,” President Jeffrey R. Holland once said to the citizens of this campus, “you have help from both sides of the veil, and you must never forget that. When disappointment and discouragement strike—and they will—you remember and never forget that if our eyes could be opened we would see horses and chariots of fire as far as the eye can see riding at reckless speed to come to our protection. They will always be there, these armies of heaven, in defense of Abraham’s seed.”²

May we remember and never forget that, thanks to the incomparable gift of the Savior’s atonement and resurrection, we have the hosts of heaven to help us in our work. May we “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope” (2 Ne. 31:20), trusting that one day we shall see “things as they really are” (Jacob 4:13) because “we shall see him as he is” (Moro. 7:48).

When that day of grace arises, not one cloud will dim its dawn.

¹ “He is Risen!” *Hymns*, no. 199.

² Jeffrey R. Holland, “For Times of Trouble,” *BYU Devotional*, March 18, 1980,

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland/times-trouble/>.