

LIGHT REFLECTIONS

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All Good

In a great, underappreciated Book of Mormon passage, the Savior Himself directs a stirring appeal to the book's latter-day readers: "And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good," He says, "is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good" (Ether 4:12).

All good. As another year and semester roll round to their close—as another Christmas season creeps upon me unawares—I give thanks for the living Son of the living God—the fount of every blessing, the source of each good thing.

I give thanks for the earth itself, created by His hands and crafted with His care "both to please the eye and to gladden the heart" (D&C 59:18).

"The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God" (D&C 88:45).

I give thanks for our precious plot on this broad globe—for this peaceful valley and its surrounding mountains, which stand as watchful sentinels, guarding our beautiful campus.

I give thanks for the human ties and attachments that give life its richness and meaning—for family and friends, for colleagues and co-laborers in the work of the Kingdom of God.

I give thanks for this great university—its faculty, students, and staff. We usually, and rightly, put students first, but I feel a special gratitude in this Advent season, my faculty colleagues. I have been recently reminded of you by a passage describing the Renaissance in Jacque Barzun's magnum opus, *From Dawn to Decadence*:

"One tends to think of what goes by that name [Renaissance] as comprising a handful of geniuses with a group of admirers, patrons, and articulate supporters whose names appear (so to speak) as footnotes in smaller type. Actually, it is a large crowd of highly gifted people . . . Together, by what they do and say, they help to keep stirred up the productive excitement; they stimulate the genius in their midst; they are the necessary mulch for the period's exceptional growths."¹

I give thanks for you, the "highly gifted," who make this university a place of "productive excitement," and who by your example and precept "stimulate the [student] genius in [our] midst." I have repeated often, both publicly and privately, my conviction that never in the history of the world has there been such a comingling of academic excellence and spiritual devotion as at present among this faculty. That powerful mixture helps make this university what President Kimball said it should be: "a refining host" for "brilliant stars."²

In every prospective-faculty interview I conduct, I quote this line from our mission statement: "To succeed in this mission the university must provide an environment enlightened by living prophets and sustained by those moral virtues which characterize the life and teachings of the Son of God."³ Thank you for providing just such an environment—not least by being "enlightened by living prophets" yourselves, and by embodying Christlike virtues.

I surely don't deserve it, but I can't imagine any university administrator anywhere being treated with the kindness and encouragement, the patience and long-suffering that I've found from so many of you. I give thanks for your goodness, which persuades me to do good and be better.

Your goodness, I know, reflects His. To me you are beautiful upon the mountains, and in this valley.

I give thanks for goodness and beauty and truth—in every age and among all peoples, in every discipline and from every human soul.

I give thanks for Him who is Goodness personified, Beauty unexampled, and incarnate Truth.

“I am the Spirit of truth” (D&C 93:26).

“Good cometh of none, save it be of me” (Ether 4:12).

“And behold, I say unto you, this is not all. For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people” (Mosiah 15:18).

With the angels I give thanks for “good tidings of great joy” (Luke 2:10). May those tidings lead us to Him, and may He then lead us “to all good” (Ether 4:12).

Merry Christmas.

Christmas Song

Thou, precious Babe of Bethlehem,
Thou, fair above all things,
Thou, peerless, priceless, matchless gem,
I sing thee King of Kings.

Thou, Little One in swaddling bands,
Whose wonders never cease,
Who strung the stars and strewed the sands,
I sing thee Prince of Peace.

Thou, tiny Infant on the hay,
Before whom shepherds bend,
I sing thee Light and Endless Day,
First, Last, and Without End.

Thou neonate, incarnate Lord,
With tiny fingers, forehead, toes,
Fit frame to host the primal Word,
I sing thee Sharon’s Rose.

Thou Day Spring and thou Morning Star,
In whom all beauties dwell;
With eastern kings who trek afar
I sing Immanuel.

In Bethlehem, a Babe thou art;
On Sinai, wast I AM.
I sing with trumpet-voice and heart
Thee, Lion now made Lamb.

¹ Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life* (HarperCollins, 2000) 67.

² Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University” in John S. Tanner (ed),

Envisioning BYU: Volume 1 – Foundations and Dreams (Brigham Young University, 2022) 49.

³ “The Mission of Brigham Young University” in John S. Tanner (ed), *Envisioning BYU: Volume 1 – Foundations and Dreams* (Brigham Young University, 2022) 65.