

AN OLIVE LEAF

THE HEAVY HEART, THE DWINDLING HOPE

By Jeffrey R. Holland

The following is excerpted from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's April 1996 General Conference address, "A Handful of Meal and a Little Oil" (Ensign, May 1996, 29–31).

WE MAY NOT yet be the Zion of which our prophets foretold and toward which the poets and priests of Israel have pointed us, but we long for it and we keep working toward it. I do not know whether a full implementation of such a society can be realized until Christ comes, but I know that when He did come to the Nephites, His majestic teachings and ennobling spirit led to the happiest of all times, a time in which "there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift" (4 Nephi 1:2–3). That blessed circumstance was, I suppose, achieved on only one other occasion of which we know—the city of Enoch, where "they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18).

The Prophet Joseph Smith had such a grand view of our possibilities, a view given him by the revelations of God. He knew that the real task was in being more Christlike—caring the way the Savior cared, loving the way he loved, "every man seeking the interest of his neighbor," the scripture says, "and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God" (D&C 82:19).

That was what Jacob in the Book of Mormon had taught—that "after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted" (Jacob 2:19).

I pay tribute to all of you, to all who do so much and care so deeply and labor with "the intent to do good." So many are so generous. I know that some of you are struggling to make ends meet in your own lives and still you find something to share. As King Benjamin cautioned his people, it is not intended that we run faster than we have strength and all things should be done in order (Mosiah 4:27). I love you and your Heavenly Father loves you for all you are trying to do.



FURTHERMORE, I know that a talk in general conference is not going to cut through the centuries of temporal inequity that have plagued humankind, but I also know that the gospel of Jesus Christ holds the answer to every social and political and economic problem this world has ever faced. And I know we can each do something, however small that act may seem to be. We can pay an honest tithe and give

our fast and free-will offerings, according to our circumstances. And we can watch for other ways to help. To worthy causes and needy people, we can give time if we don't have money, and we can give love when our time runs out. We can share the loaves we have and trust God that the cruse of oil will not fail.

And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need. (Alma 1:30)

How much that passage from the first chapter of Alma sounds like the wonder that was Nauvoo. Said the Prophet Joseph in that blessed time: "Respecting how much a man . . . shall give . . . we have no special instructions. . . ; he is to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide for the widow, to dry up the tear of the orphan, to comfort the afflicted, whether in this church, or in any other, or in no church at all, wherever he finds them" (*Times and Seasons*, 15 March 1842, 732).

Remember what the Book of Mormon taught us. It is difficult enough to be poor in material goods, but the greater pain is in the heavy heart, the dwindling hope, the damaged dreams, the parental anguish, the childhood disappointment that almost always attend such circumstances. . . .

MAY God, who has blessed all of us so mercifully and many of us so abundantly, bless us with one thing more. May he bless us to hear the often silent cries of the sorrowing and the afflicted, the downtrodden, the disadvantaged, the poor. Indeed may he bless us to hear the whispering of the Holy Spirit when any neighbor anywhere "is suffering," and to "drop everything and come running." ☪