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“As My Father Hath Sent Me, Even So Send I You”¹

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I am grateful to be with you in this Christmas season when we celebrate the birth of the Savior and commemorate and remember why He came and who He is now.

I want to share with you today some thoughts about the birth of the Savior and His connection to all of us working in the Church Educational System and especially at BYU-Pathway Worldwide.

I’d like to begin and have you reflect on, think about, all the people that were central to the birth of the Savior as depicted in the New Testament, especially in Matthew and Luke. You might think of the angel Gabriel; Mary; Joseph; Elizabeth; Zacharias; Anna; Simeon; the wise men; the shepherds; and, of course, the baby Jesus, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, the Lamb of God, our Savior and Redeemer. They all played an important role in bringing to pass this most important thing that has ever happened since the creation of the world, which is the birth and life, ministry and atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of these people were there either in Nazareth or Bethlehem, sometimes both, and in Jerusalem as part of the great plan of salvation of the Father. Now, you and I were all there in the Great Council in the premortal realm. We were there when we heard Heavenly Father teach us His plan and then ask this most important, penetrating question: “Whom shall I send?² Whom shall I send to be the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind?” And of course, we were there when we heard the great Jehovah, who would become Jesus of Nazareth, who answered and said, “Father, here am I, send me.”³ We were there, and we shouted for joy, because we knew Him and we knew the plan would work.⁴ Despite all of Satan’s effort in that premortal realm, we stood firm and valiant in the testimony of Jesus, trusting in Him that He would, in fact, be our Savior and Redeemer, that He would complete the great atoning sacrifice and suffer and die and rise on the third day and continue His work until the day comes when He presents all of His work — all the ordinances done for all of God’s children and every person who ever lived or has lived or will ever live in all of God’s creations. He presents complete and finished. Then His work will be done. So you were there, and you heard those marvelous words when the Savior said, “Here am I, send me.”

I want to focus for just a moment on the word “send.” I believe this word is full of important meaning for us. When the Father asked, “Whom shall I send?”, He was not asking a question about who should He dispatch to the earth. That is not what the word meant. I think it’s a question about who should He entrust with this most important of all missions, with all the power and authority, with all the preparation, with all the divine support required for Him, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to complete His great atoning sacrifice. So when He said, “Whom shall I send?”, He really meant “Who’s prepared? Who is ready? Who will have the power and authority and divine character that will allow Him to support this incredible mission and complete the atoning sacrifice?”

The fact that the Father asked the question shows His great reverence for and love for us and honor that He gives to our agency. Even Jesus, the Great Jehovah, had to choose to be sent. He chose. Now, He was prepared. The Father even said that He had prepared His Beloved Son, chosen by God the Father from the beginning to be the Savior and Redeemer. But that Son, the firstborn of the Spirit, He had to choose. He had to choose to be sent. And so He did.

¹ [John 20:21](#)

² [Abraham 3:27](#)

³ Ibid

⁴ See [Job 38:7](#)

Now, many times during His mortal ministry, Jesus was at pain — sometimes real pain. That pain is to remind everyone He spoke to that His Father sent Him (in the sense that I explained) with power, with authority, with preparation, with divine character, with everything He needed.

So here's an example. Just three short references in John:

But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.⁵

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.⁶

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.⁷

This is from the great Intercessory Prayer. Jesus declared that the Father had sent Him (with all the meaning that we talked about before). And His mission was to complete the great atoning sacrifice, but also to establish His Church, and to call Twelve Apostles, and to endow them with authority and power to carry out His work. And all of this was given to Him by His Father when His Father sent Him.

So, sent by the Father as a marvelous gift to us, the Lord and Savior brings to us supernal gifts and blessings:

- **Light and life:** He is the Light and the Life of the World.
- **Love:** His pure and perfect love that never fails.
- **Hope:** Hope in Him for a glorious resurrection, and hope that His love and His power will be in our lives.
- **Peace and joy:** He is the Prince of Peace; in Him we find joy in this life and a fullness of joy in the life to come.
- **Redemption and salvation:** Because of His atoning sacrifice, He has the redeeming power to cleanse us from sin and from all unrighteousness, to transform us and change us to help us to become more and more like Him.
- **Strength:** His strength that allows us to do all things that are His will.
- **Healing:** He heals us. He heals us of broken hearts and wounded souls. He heals us of pain and suffering and sickness and affliction.
- **Gifts:** He gives us gifts; gifts of courage we do not have; gifts of patience we don't have (I am witness); gifts of kindness; gifts of spiritual power, beyond anything we can imagine, to accomplish His work.

Now Jesus made it very clear that just as His Father sent Him into the world, so Jesus sent His Apostles in exactly the same way. This is what He said — this is again from the Intercessory Prayer — speaking to His Father:

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. ... Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may become in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.⁸

⁵ [John 5:36](#)

⁶ [John 8:42](#)

⁷ [John 17:3](#)

⁸ [John 17:18, 20–22](#)

You see, Jesus sent His Apostles, not so that the people would know the Apostles were sent by Jesus, but that God the Father sent the Christ, who is our Savior and Redeemer. They, therefore, became special witnesses of Jesus Christ so that people to whom they preached and taught would know that God had sent His Son to be our Savior and Redeemer.

Now, I believe this also means that Mary and Joseph were sent by God in exactly the same way to be the parents. They were both from the Davidic line. They were in Nazareth at exactly the same time. They got to know each other; they were betrothed, espoused, as they said. They were there in right time and in the right place, and Mary was prepared to be the mother of the Son of God. Joseph, a man of great character and great responsibility, became the mortal father of the Son of God.

We could say the same thing for Zacharias, for Elizabeth, for John the Baptist — they were all sent. Anna and Simeon and the shepherds were sent. They were there to witness that the baby was actually born and that this is the promised Messiah, and they then could share that witness with other people. And of course there was Gabriel, who had a lot to do in those days — meeting with Mary, helping her understand in a powerful way that she would be the mother of the Son of God; helping Zacharias, who didn't quite get it, and therefore had to suffer a little bit and then he got it, and he got it so well that his prophecy of his son and of the Redeemer is marvelous to read. He got it eventually. And of course, Gabriel was the angel who warned Mary and Joseph to take Jesus into Egypt and invited them back when the coast was clear. So Gabriel watched over all of them and made it possible for the Son of God to do His work.

Just as Jesus had to choose to be sent by the Father, so we have to choose to be sent by Him. What I'd like you to take away today is that all of us have that privilege. Now, you are all here. So I believe you chose to be sent by the Lord to do His work through this marvelous organization in His true and living Church. And because you're here, you've chosen to be sent. So the question is, what have you been sent to do?

Now, I'm going to encourage you not to think about your daily job. That's actually a part, but that's not *why* you were sent here. Your daily work is important, but you need to understand what you're really about. And so I have four answers for this question: "Why has God sent you to BYU-Pathway?"

Now, if any of you have any doubt that He has sent you here, I just invite you to get on your knees. Then ask Heavenly Father, "Did you send me to BYU-Pathway?" And you will get this *vwoom!* You know how that works? *Vwoom!* I don't think you'll get the sound effects, but you'll know, if you don't already.

Answer #1: Do what the Savior does

You have been sent to do what the Savior does, with Him. I'll give you a little story. This is a Pathway story about a woman named Valerie. This was very early days in Pathway. We had a meeting at BYU-Idaho, and we had a meeting with our advisory board. They came in, and we had students who were studying in Pathway come. We gave them three microphones, they sat up front, and we had them just tell their stories, because this was the first time that that advisory group had ever seen a Pathway student. In those days, they were rare. Pathway students were rare in those days. Right? They were just a handful (well, not quite a handful), but there were only like 100 of them in the world. So it's like going to see rare things, so here's a rare Pathway student.

The first one who spoke just, I mean, she was incredible. Her name was Valerie. And she stood up there and she said — these are the first words out of her mouth: "I am not the ninety and nine. I am the one, and Pathway rescued me."

The Spirit was so strong when she spoke those words. I still remember how I felt, the tears. And then she told her story. She was late twenties, married, had three kids. When she was 15 or 16, she was a star student in high school. She had hopes and dreams. And then she got pregnant, and she decided to get married, she and her

husband. And they did. They got married. She bore that child, and then more came to their home, and by the time she was in her late-twenties, she had three kids. Her grandfather passed away not long before she spoke at that meeting, about the year before, and she was with him in the hospital. He pulled her close to him and he whispered in her ear. On his deathbed, he said to her, “Don’t give up your dream.” And then he died.

Well, she didn’t know how in the world she could do it. She knew she needed education, but there was no way. It was too expensive. She had three kids. It just wasn’t in the cards. Until one day her mother called and said, “I want you to come with me to the church.” She hadn’t been to church in a long time, like a decade. And she said, “There’s a new program I think you’ll want to know about.” Valerie was blown away. And in her heart, the whisperings of the Spirit were, “This is for you.” And so she enrolled.

I was there at BYU-Idaho (I was the president). I presided over the commencement service in which she graduated with a bachelor’s degree from BYU-Idaho a number of years later. She is a miracle and an amazing story of perseverance, faith, and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. She’s back and active in the Church, her husband came back, her kids came back. Pathway rescued her and her eternal family.

Do what the Savior does. Give light and life to the invisible many, many of whom are in darkness and who are estranged from their Father in Heaven. You bring them back. You give hope to people who feel hopelessness. You give peace and joy to people. Give strength to those who feel weak. Give love to those who don’t have it. That’s what we do.

Answer #2: Develop disciple leaders

Answer number two. It’s right on the website, I’m happy to say. It is to develop disciple-leaders, disciples of Jesus Christ who are leaders in their families, in the Church, in their work, in their communities, wherever they are. Being a disciple leader is a high and holy calling. President Nelson, in a talk he gave to young adults [in January of 2017], issued a blessing to the Church: “I bless you to be a ... true disciple of Jesus Christ. ... I bless you each to be a righteous leader in your family, community, country, and in the Church.”⁹

So we have the prophet who has called us all to be disciple leaders. That’s what we do. You help people become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and leaders in their families and in their work and in the Church of God. So that’s an important responsibility, and both words are really important. That’s to be a disciple, a true disciple of Christ: making covenants with the Father through the Savior and keeping them; serving in the kingdom; keeping the commandments of the Lord; listening to the impressions of the Spirit, acting on them; being an instrument in God’s hands to do His work; bringing light and love, peace and joy, to other people.

It’s also important to help them understand how to be a leader. It doesn’t have to do with position or responsibility; it has to do with what is in your heart. Because leadership, in the sense I mean it here, is a willingness to take initiative, guided by the Spirit, to bring about good things in your family, in your work, and in God’s kingdom. That’s what the education is about. It’s about that. It’s about becoming a disciple and becoming a person who has the confidence and faith and skill to take initiative, to do good things — to know what it means to do good things in their work, their families, and wherever they are.

Answer #3: The light has to be in you

For all of you to be able to do that, to do your work in a way that allows these tens of thousands of people whom we serve now to become disciple leaders, *you* have to be disciple leaders. So you have chosen to be sent to be personally a disciple of Jesus Christ — a true disciple, true to your covenants in every way, faithful and true in all

⁹ See Russell M. Nelson, “[Prophets, Leadership, and Divine Law](#),” (Worldwide Devotional for Young Adults, Jan. 8, 2017), broadcasts.churchofjesuschrist.org;

things; and a leader, willing to take initiative, to do good things, to move the work forward, not because somebody told you what to do. The work can't wait for that, brothers and sisters.

Now, this doesn't mean that you can go off and be the lone ranger, out doing whatever you think. That's not what this is about. This is about taking initiative within the framework of principle and guidance that you have received from the Lord through His appointed leaders. But in that scope, it's wide. We cannot wait for some group within the hierarchy to decide what to do for everybody else. It would take too long. Think about it. This is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There are 4,000 stakes. There are almost 40,000 wards. You can't wait for just a few people, even the prophets of God. They don't wait. They don't wait to get the word out to everybody. They just expect you and me to listen to the whisperings of the Holy Ghost and know the principles that drive success in God's kingdom. So, brothers and sisters, don't wait. Be leaders. Do what's right. Build the kingdom. Take initiative, and you will be disciple leaders in God's kingdom.

Answer #4: Fulfill the destiny of BYU-Pathway

Now, answer number four. You are sent by the Lord, and you've chosen to be sent, to fulfill the destiny of BYU-Pathway Worldwide. It has a destiny. There is a grand plan, our Father in Heaven's plan, and you are all part of it. This organization is part of that.

JD mentioned a kind of vision I had of little Primary children. I made that statement when I became the president of BYU-Idaho. That was in 2005. The world has changed a lot since then. And you've changed. This organization has changed a lot. You didn't exist in 2005. There was no Pathway. Yet here we are, 18 years later, and it's become this thing. It's amazing! I'm amazed. I was there at the beginning. I'm amazed. It's amazing. You're amazing!

Now I would just give you a couple numbers to keep you on your toes. Five years ago, I gave a talk at the BYU-Pathway President's Dinner entitled, "BYU-Pathway Worldwide: A School in Zion." The Lord said in the 97th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, "I, the Lord, am well pleased that there should be a school in Zion."¹⁰ I believe strongly this is the school in Zion. Everywhere Zion is, is BYU-Pathway. Everywhere. Now, when I gave that talk, I gave an estimate of what the target audience of BYU-Pathway should be, how many we should have in mind. I used a number 3–4 million Latter-day Saints.

Since that time, we have to make the number bigger. The Church is bigger, but now the mandate is bigger. Serve more people. You don't have to be a Latter-day Saint to be a part of BYU-Pathway Worldwide. So, I hesitate to tell you this, but there are a lot of people in that mandate. It's kind of funny. JD was right. We rejoiced when we had 500 people. We thought that was phenomenal. We started out with 50, and some of them dropped out, and then we had 500 one day. It was incredible! Then when BYU-Pathway was approved as a regular program of the Church, there were 3,000. We thought that was amazing. Well, then it went up by an order of magnitude, and all of the sudden there were 30,000 people. And now, the mandate's bigger. It's hard to see, brothers and sisters, but if you just squint a little bit, you can see the day when we will have to add more zeros to the numbers of people we serve without in any way changing the quality and power and impact that we have in the lives of those people.

This is God's work, and He intends that there be light all across the Earth. There are going to be hundreds, maybe thousands, of temples, and BYU-Pathway will be everywhere. And there will be light all over the Earth. Oh, there will be darkness (you can be sure of that), but the Lord is in charge. There will be light everywhere, and people will see it. They will see it in the people in BYU-Pathway. They will see it in the people who come out of the Lord's temples. They'll be drawn to the light to seek an education, to change the world — their world, and the world around them, and they will do it. And then the day will come when the world will be prepared for the Second Coming of the Lord, because there will be so much light. That's why you've been sent by your Father in Heaven to this place and at this time.

¹⁰ [Doctrine and Covenants 97:3](#)

I so testify and leave you with my witness that it's all true. God in heaven lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is His Church. He works. He is far out in front of us, preparing the way personally for each one of us and for His work in His kingdom. I know that's true. I hope you have a joyous Christmas. And remember, brothers and sisters, that you have been sent and you chose to come. And remember, too, that in BYU-Pathway, every day is Christmas. Every day is a day of gifts and blessings from the Lord Jesus Christ. I know that's true. I love you very much. I honor you. You are engaged in an amazing thing. I hope you feel it. I hope you love it. I hope you love the Lord. I pray His blessings upon you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.