

THE Other Side OF Time

» by Sheila K. McCleve «

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CONVOCATION IN THE PROVO TABERNACLE ON APRIL 28, 2006.

President Tanner, Dean Worthen, Sister Maxwell, other honored guests, faculty, friends, family, and members of the Class of 2006, it is an honor and a blessing for me to be asked to speak to you at this significant time of these law students' lives. Thank you for extending me this opportunity. I hope that in the short time that I spend speaking to you this afternoon, I will give you encouragement, perhaps, for some time ahead when you might need to remember what graduating from the J. Reuben Clark Law School at BYU gave you.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRADLEY SLADE

First, let me say to the soon-to-be graduates: Congratulations! This is an awesome time. It really is one of those moments of your lives that you will always remember, and it certainly represents the years of hard work, dedication, and sacrifice that you each have given to get this far. Sometime when you look back and reminisce on this time, you will have a memory like a camera still shot of what happened at your graduation and what that represented to you.

Graduation is like other moments in time: the expected and the unexpected. I can remember where I was on 9/11. I can remember where I was when JFK was shot. There are other moments in time—baptism, leaving on a mission, getting married, your first job, the first case that you win, becoming a partner—that we mark. These are significant moments that mark and measure and give us that opportunity to see where we are in life. This graduation is one of them. You certainly are to be congratulated and extended great respect and acknowledgment for what you have done. We do that by honoring you at this significant moment of time today.

I was here three decades ago, sitting where you sit. I was 12 years old. That's my story and I'm sticking to it! That's not exactly true I guess. I should say I really wasn't 12. I was 12 when I got appointed to the bench, so you can only imagine how young I was when I came to law school.

Actually, I think that I am here today for a couple of reasons. One, because there is a relationship between us. You know, law is about relationships between people. Ours is that I'm your predecessor and you are my successors in some way. I suppose that means I'll predecease you, and you'll be very successful. Something like that. There is that relationship that brings me here now. There is also a viewpoint from the other side of this time that might be another reason that I'm here today.

A viewpoint from the other side of time might give you something helpful as you pass through the times ahead of you. So, I want to talk about time just a little bit. Now some people just use watches, you know, to keep track of where they are so they don't go over their suggested time to speak; but I have an hourglass. I have brought an hourglass to show you because we are talking about a moment in time in your lives today that is significant and that you mark for the rest of your

lives. That is one aspect of time. Another aspect of time is the fact of its movement between those marking periods. You are not close enough to see the sand particles, and I can't see the individual sand particles either. Even if I had really good glasses, I couldn't see the individual particles that are going through the hourglass. But you and I can be aware, and we are aware, that the sand is going through the glass. As a result of that, we can tell that time is passing.

Time is a great blessing, I think, to us. It gives us the opportunity between the space of birth, which is a marking point in time, and death, which is another marking point in time, to prove ourselves and to change ourselves. So we have this great opportunity in time to become who we want to become. Really, the key to it is to choose to spend our time between these marking points in ways that will make a difference.

I bet that when you came in today, as you marched in the processional, your parents and grandparents and those that love you looked at you much the way that Tevye and Golda looked at their children at the wedding in *Fiddler on the Roof*.

*Is this the little girl I carried?
Is this the little boy at play?*

*I don't remember growing older
When did they?*

*Sunrise, sunset
Sunrise, sunset
Swiftly flow the days
Seedlings turn overnight to sunflowers . . .*

*One season following another
Laden with happiness and tears.*
[“Sunrise, Sunset,” *The Fiddler on the Roof*, 1964]

Time seems to have passed as quickly as that for me, as it will also for you. I was just where you are in some respects, and time has passed.

Time is a great blessing because it gives us the opportunity to forget and the ability to remember. We can forget the things that were painful. We can remember the things that were good. If we look back in time, we can choose to have understanding. If we look forward in time, we can choose to have hope for the future. That is what you all have now—hope for the future. The key to the fulfillment

of that hope lies, as I said, in how you choose to spend your time. Remember these lines from “Improve the Shining Moments”:

*Improve the shining moments;
don't let them pass you by.
Work while the sun is radiant;
work, for the night draws nigh.
We cannot bid the sunbeams
to lengthen out their stay,
Nor can we ask the shadow
to ever stay away.
Time flies on wings of lightning;
we cannot call it back.
It comes, and passes forward
along its onward track.
And if we are not mindful,
the chance will fade away,
For life is quick in passing,
'tis as a single day.*
[Hymns, 1985, no. 226]

“[Now] is the time for men to prepare to meet God; . . . [This is the time in] this life . . . for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:32). So don't put things off. You will have these moments in time when you make choices that will make a difference. At each moment of those choices, opportunities will be taken or they will fade away.

I think if there is one piece of advice that I can give you today, one thing I hope you will take with you and remember and cherish throughout your lives, that one thing is not about time—it is about timelessness. It is about valuing the things that are timeless first and most.

VALUE THE THINGS THAT ARE
TIMELESS FIRST AND MOST

Maybe I can give you a couple of examples as well as a couple of suggestions about how to value the things that are timeless first and most. Because I really do believe that where your heart is, your treasure is, and that in the end you really do get what you want. So it is critical for you to realize what you want. Making choices will come at small moments of time, even subtle turning points. In later years when you have to balance the business trip or the demanding client against your daughter's soccer game or the Scout camp, you're going to have to

8, 1941

to follow

Dorothy Nor
Winslow McPherson
Take Nuptia
Vows

Miss Dorothy
daughter of Mr. and
Mrs. Hale, became the
James McPherson
an altar decorated
with flowers and
Quint played
ride. given in
of gardenias, and
Miss Susan
best man and
other and

on in the
service as
left for
they
The
blue
and with

Saturday, August 9, 1941
Lakeview

One thing I
hope you will take
with you:
Value the things
that are
timeless first
and most.

decide what you value most. Now, at different times what you choose will be different. But it is always important, I think, that you keep in mind what you value most as you make those choices. Your choices will be the evidence of your values.

I'm going to give you three examples of judges I have known or who I have worked with, and they're all good, wonderful men. They're all also Latter-day Saints.

One was a convert and came to the Church and was very active and involved and got really busy in life. He was respected in his career, respected by the bar, and very suc-

cessful. He went onto the bench a little later in his career. He spent all of his time at work. He loved to work. He had been a wonderful bishop. He came to the bench, and he did the same thing. He worked. He took extra cases. He stayed nights. He worked all the time. He loved to be in that position and to have influence. His wife left him. He left the Church. He remarried and has a new, young stepfamily, and he still works, taking extra cases and doing things for the bar or the bench that are very productive and contributive to the community.

The second is a judge who came to the bench at a relatively young age and wanted to be very successful and also to make a lot of money to be able to support his family well. He was working every way he could to figure out how, legitimately, to make a good living. He decided to leave the bench, because, although he liked being a judge, he found a better opportunity to make a lot of money. He went into business and made a lot of money. He's very wealthy. He does quite well. He is

well regarded in the community, and he is a likeable person. He also ended up divorced. He did not leave the Church. He did remarry and is still doing quite well financially.

The third is a judge that never took himself too seriously. He loved to do work on the bench and was devoted to his wife. She was devoted to him. He loved his children and the people he was called to serve. As a Scout leader he would take the time to bring his Scout troop over to the court and show them how the court worked. He talked to them about the law. He joked with people and was quite popular.

All of these judges, let me emphasize, are good peo-

ple, good judges, and exceptional people. I don't, in reference to them, mean to disregard the many complex factors that affect people's lives. And I wouldn't want to judge any of them. But I think for purposes of illustration, I submit to you that these judges really are where they want to be, that they've gotten what they want out of life. One has position and work, one has money, and the third one, who retired early (and didn't wait to get all of his retirement benefits), left two weeks ago with his wife on a mission to serve the Church on a small island off the coast of Africa. At this point, it seems that each has chosen what they value.

That will be the way it will be in your lives. As lawyers you future graduates will have the opportunity for position, money, respect, power, and influence. There is no question that that is what you will do. You will have it given to you. The question really is what you will do with it. You can have every-

thing. And there isn't anything wrong with making money or having a position of influence. But what I hope you will remember as you make choices in life is that if you put first things first, if you put the kingdom first, all things—more than you can imagine—will ultimately be yours. And so my suggestions for valuing those things that are timeless first and most are these: First, appreciate the gifts of BYU and the J. Reuben Clark Law School, the experience that that has been and what that has given you. Brigham Young said:

Education is the power to think clearly, the power to act well in the world's work, and the power to appreciate life.

[Brigham Young, quoted by George H. Brimhall in "The Brigham Young University," *Improvement Era*, July 1920, 831]

The mission of Brigham Young University is:

to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life. To this end, BYU seeks to develop students of faith, intellect, and character, who have the skills and the desire to continue learning and to serve others throughout their lives.

["BYU Mission Statement," approved by the BYU Board of Trustees November 4, 1981]

You know that motto you see when you approach BYU: "Enter to learn; go forth to serve." But the truth more accurately stated is that you enter to learn and to serve, and you go forth to continue to learn and to serve. That is what an eternal education is. President David O. McKay said:

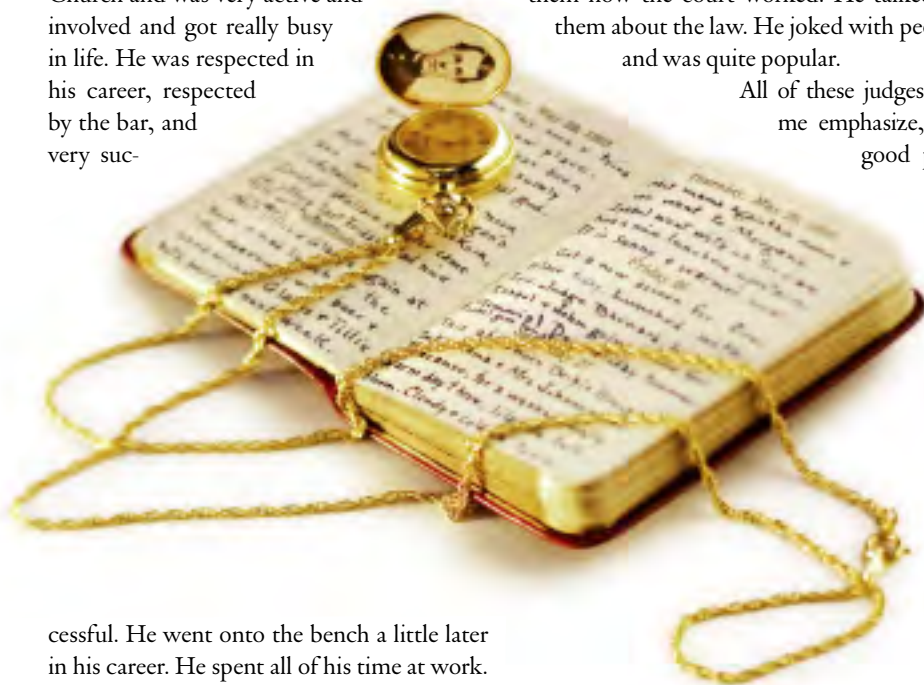
True education seeks . . . to make men and women not only good mathematicians [or in your case lawyers], proficient linguists, profound scientists, or brilliant literary lights, but also honest men, combined with virtue, temperance, and brotherly love.

[David O. McKay, "Why Education?" *Improvement Era*, vol. 70, no. 9 (September 1967), 3]

And Ernest Wilkinson said: "If most institutions of higher learning aspire to be only communities of scholars, we are privileged to be also a congregation of disciples."

At the establishment of the Law School, Marion G. Romney said:

The Board of Trustees, in establishing a school of law, did so that there may be an institution in which



you, the members of this class [speaking of me] and all those who shall follow you [speaking of you] may “obtain a knowledge of . . . the laws of . . . man” in light of the “laws of God.”

So we hope what BYU and the J. Reuben Clark Law School have given you is an eternal education, an increased strength of character, and maybe a glimpse, affirmation, or inkling of your calling, of your individual purpose, in God’s plan. Perhaps you have discovered something about what you can do, how you can serve, and who you are. From the dedicatory prayer of the J. Reuben Clark Law Building in 1975, let me quote Marion G. Romney again. He said:

Help the lawyers trained in this law school to remember that they are to be the guardians of the Law Isaiah spoke of three thousand years ago, when he said: “Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

So remember who you are.

The second thing I want to offer as an observation is to remind you that the law is adversarial and so is life. Life is adversarial; there is opposition—opposition in all things. Don’t forget that. In my years on the bench I have seen every type of inhumanity, depravity, weakness, dishonesty, and sin that you can imagine—and some you’d never imagine. I’ve seen law schoolmates, elementary schoolmates, and all other levels of schoolmates, friends, neighbors, Church members, bishops, stake presidents, people in high places, and well-known members of the community who have all come before me as criminal defendants. We are all capable of great good, and we are all capable of evil. In some moments, when I have felt my own incapacity, along with all of this I have thought of the scripture “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). There are moments, I confess, when I have wondered why they bothered. This life is a fight, and there are hard, ugly, and very incredible things that are happening all around us, things that I never would have imagined had I not seen them.

Now you may go into another kind of law that doesn’t involve as much criminal work as I do. I know that none of you are this way, but I hope that you will not become like the bomber pilot on an episode of “MASH”

who saw himself as removed from the fight. Hawkeye was at the mobile hospital putting together the bodies and trying to keep life alive, and this bomber pilot was a fresh-faced kid who pretty much treated his job in the war as nine-to-five. He’d fly with his load, which was bombs, and drop them at ground targets, come back, and enjoy his happy, party-filled life when he returned. He felt pretty good about it. He just happened to get slightly injured when his plane was shot down. So he came to be at the MASH and was talking to Hawkeye about how easy the war was for him. Hawkeye created an experience for him that taught him a lesson about the lives he was daily destroying by the bomb dropping and what it meant to be at war. Don’t be so naive as that young man to think that what you will be doing in law and in life isn’t involved in the real fight of the world, because it is. You will be affecting people’s lives whatever you do. Law is about relationships between people.

Law—and life—is a fight, a battleground. The fight is real, and you are right in the middle of it. I quote from Ephesians 6:12: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

You are in a profession that is adversarial, and you will be fighting the fight, and we believe and expect you to be able to do it. Don’t forget the battle is real. Continue to learn, to serve, and to remember and appreciate what you have been given here to enable you to do it.

I especially hope that you will remember who you really are. As Marion Romney said more than 30 years ago, you are “the guardians of the Law Isaiah spoke of three thousand years ago, when he said, ‘Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.’”

Also, I hope you won’t forget who you serve. C. S. Lewis wrote in *The Weight of Glory*:

It may be possible for each [of] us to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbour. . . . It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses. . . . It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one

another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. . . . Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses.

[C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 14–15; emphasis in original; see also Mosiah 2:17]

Remember who you are, who they are whom you serve, and especially and finally, remember in whom you trust. I particularly like a quote from Mother Teresa that sets a high bar for Christian behavior. I guess I like it because it’s the same advice my father gave me and has always stood me well in those moments where everything seems to be a struggle, when life is an overwhelming fight. Mother Teresa’s statement reminds me of my father’s advice. She says this:

People are often unreasonable and self-centered. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are honest, people may cheat you. Be honest anyway. If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway. The good you do today may often be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. Give the world your best, and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway. For you see, in the end it is between you and God. It never was between you and them, anyway.

Let me again say to you, “Congratulations!” This is an incredible moment in your lives. Let me extend to you from the other side of time all good wishes for happy and productive and faithful lives. The world and eternity await you.

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