

Stepping Boldly Into the Future

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Today I will be sharing with you the same essential contents of a very important message that True Father gave to the United States Congress 40 years ago, almost to the day. Last week in New York—perhaps some of you already have seen the video—we had a wonderful memorial service honoring the second year of True Father’s passing, and the underlying philosophy that we wanted to have is to try to remember True Father in all his different personas, all his different characteristics.

The Different Roles of True Father

Of course, for most of the brothers and sisters in the auditorium last week we saw him as our True Father, our spiritual leader, our Messiah, our savior, but there were many other pastors there from other communities. They remembered True Father as a preacher, and sometimes as a preacher who could go on very long, and a man who loved the Word of God, who loved the Scriptures.

And then there were the friends from the United Nations and the NGO community as well. They’re not so interested in True Father as a preacher, but they do remember his work for peace—in the Middle East, where so many times we brought together Christian ministers, Jewish rabbis and Muslim imams to try to unite as children of Abraham. And on the Korean Peninsula, where even today the efforts to bring some unity and closure to the Korean people are still ongoing. So for them, that was their memory, and then there are others who remember True Father as a great patron of the sports—a lover of soccer and martial arts. Or even of the arts. His life was so diverse and so broad, and what we wanted was for everybody to find their True Father in the memorial because we wanted people to leave feeling, “I will take on this work. The work is not finished, and God is calling me to take on some small part of it and bring it to completion.” And that also would be my goal for you today: to remind yourselves that God’s work is not complete, and that in fact He is calling us to take it forward, to move along.

God’s Call throughout History was Not a Matter of Number

One of the biggest challenges for me, and perhaps for many of you, is to keep God’s perspective and not be overwhelmed by the small scope of what we see as human beings. Sometimes there seems to be just too much trouble in the world, too many problems in America, even struggles in our own community or our own families, and it seems this is really too much, we’re kidding ourselves if we think that we are going to make an impact.

But that’s not true. In fact, throughout history God always has been looking for a small group of people to start with. In the speech that True Father gave to the United States Congress, he walked the congressmen and senators through that path of God’s history, starting all the way back with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—the fathers of faith. One thing he pointed out was that if you were able to rely only on the Bible, you would think that these men and their families were the only people on Earth. They strode alone across the plains of Canaan or Syria. There’s very little account of them interacting with anyone else at all. So you may think, “Well, in those days it was easy. God had His champions; there was almost nobody else

around; God talked to them every day; and, of course, they were able to keep the vision of God's plan alive," but in reality, of course, it was very different.

They also were just a handful of people in a society with many different religions, many different cultures, many different languages, and they faced exactly the same challenges we do today to keep faith alive, to keep believing that the small things that "I" do can make a big difference on the great scale. And the truth of the matter is that often they didn't know the plan of God in its complete end; they knew only the little part that God had asked them.

Of course, it didn't change at the time of the Exodus—this is all from True Father's speech—when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, what we think of is, perhaps you've seen the film "The Ten Commandments."

Such an amazing and dramatic story with the Red Sea parting, and the Egyptians in chaos, but interestingly the Egyptian records of that time don't have any record of the Israelites leaving. It might be that losers don't like writing that part of the history, but more likely it just wasn't such a big deal for them. For a big Egyptian empire with millions of people, the departure of a few thousand people from their minority group may not actually have warranted a great deal of interest. It's kind of a shock to hear that, but that what it seems that it might be.

So from God's perspective, from the providential perspective, the Exodus was extremely important. It was the beginning of a new history. But for everybody else, it was no big deal. And again, when Jesus came 2,000 years ago, for the writers of the Bible, for the community of faith, for the saints Paul and others, this was the turning point of history, but at the time nobody knew that.

It was pointed out to me recently that at the time of Jesus' crucifixion, the act of crucifixion itself was almost an everyday or an every-week event. There's evidence that the Romans may have crucified several hundred thousand people. Terrible though it is, it also means that that day may not have been very different from any other day for most of the people living at the time.

Why am I telling you this? Because I think it is important to remind ourselves that just because the world at large and America as a whole may not see the opportunities of God's coming Kingdom that we see, it doesn't mean that it isn't here.

God Sees No Obstacles

The last time that I was in Los Angeles, I was on the God's Hope for America pilgrimage to the Holy Grounds across the United States. I think many of you participated in the event in Griffith Park. Thank you. Much later along the tour we had the chance to drive through Northern Idaho, and we came through Hell's Canyon. I don't know if you've been to Hell's Canyon; apparently it's deeper than the Grand Canyon. But what I remember is mile upon mile upon mile of bleak, stony mountains. Very, very steep elevation coming all the way down to the river and road. It looks like no one has lived there for thousands and thousands of years. After you spend two or three hours driving through that in rain and mist, you can feel incredibly lonely, almost as if the people on the bus are the only people in the world.

And the next day, by contrast, we were driving from Missoula, Montana, through to Seattle through the Cascade Mountains, and on those mountains there are billions and billions of trees, all standing to attention as far as you can see. Countless numbers. While I was looking at that, I had a revelation and insight from God. He told me, "Think about yesterday: those empty mountains and those bleak slopes. Then look out at the window to these forests today. You see bleak mountains; you see a small church struggling to survive, with no friends anywhere, like those mountains in Hell's Canyon. But I see hillsides thronged with millions and billions of heavenly warriors, in the spirit world and on Earth, ready to build God's Kingdom. What you see and what I see are different, and that's the problem that you have to solve and this church has to solve." We have to think again about what God sees when He looks at America, when He looks at us!

That was the message that True Father brought to the United States Congress forty years ago, and I think you're familiar with it, but the key points are: God's Providence keeps moving; whenever He meets an obstacle, He tries to find a people and a nation that are ready to do His Will; and it takes a lot of time and preparation—in the case of the United States, hundreds of years from the arrival of the first Pilgrims up until the time when True Parents could come to America.

True Father loved and studied American history very much. And you can see it flowing through these early speeches: He knows about George Washington; he knows about the prayer, the desperate prayer, of Washington that God would work to liberate America from—I gotta say it, an English oppression—and that God would not allow the history of Europe to repeat in America.

When we visited Plymouth, Massachusetts, and saw the Mayflower, the ship on which the Pilgrims came,

I was really surprised to find that of the 102 people on that boat, only 51 were Pilgrims, the Pilgrim Fathers. The other 51 had come to America to do business, buy land, to profit, to prosper. And both groups needed each other. The ship wouldn't sail unless it had a full complement of paying passengers. The Pilgrims needed those commercial people to be on the boat, and once they arrived, they separated and started to build a new community.

Again, God told me as we were leaving Plymouth, "Why don't you count the number of people on this bus?" So I did. 51. Exactly the same number as those Pilgrims. So I felt that in little ways God was telling me, "See things as I see them." It's not the numbers of people that are most important; it's whether or not those people, whether we, can see things the way God sees them or not.

God's Will is Unchanging

True Father wanted to tell the American senators and congressmen, who normally are thinking only of partisan and political things, "Think of yourselves as if you were saints of God." I'm sure not many politicians hear that they are saints of God, but True Father told them that that day. He said, "God has great expectations for this country; He wants it to be a servant to the other nations of the world; He wants America to be the country that educates the people of the world, that solves the problem of poverty, that ends the wars and conflicts that plague our society."

You may think, "Well, that was very idealistic." Back then it was the time of the Vietnam War; since then we've had so many conflicts, and now it seems we are entering another. But despite that, God's desire, God's hope for America remains the same. And at no point in his speech after that beginning did True Father refer again to the Unification Church. He put it in context, but from that point on he spoke of God's vision for all of America, all the people of this nation.

I think that's very important to remember: If God has a hope for America, it's not just a hope for the several hundred people here in this auditorium but for all the people of Los Angeles and all the 320 million people of America. We are all together in this because God has an expectation for this country that will not change.

True Father pointed out that God Himself is eternal, absolute and unchanging, so God's Will also does not change. It doesn't change because there are setbacks; it doesn't change when people disappoint Him and don't fulfill what God had hoped for. God may choose new people to take on the responsibility, but the goal and the vision do not change. It cannot change, because in the end God's vision and hope for America and all nations is the same vision that He's carried with Him from the very beginning of human history, that we fulfill God's three blessings. And what are they? To be fruitful, to be standing in the image of God, to be like God in our character, in our heart, in our mind; to multiply, to have families that resemble God, in which every member of the family, True Father says, is a beloved son or daughter of God who understands their incredible value; and, to have dominion, to make this world a place where all God's children can live in peace and prosperity.

Those things do not change; they will never change. But what I really liked in True Father's speech was where he took it next...

It Starts with "Me"

After True Father took the congressmen and the senators through all of human history up until the present time in America, I thought that he might paint some big, abstract goals, but instead he turned it right back to the people sitting there at the U.S. Capitol. He said, "All of God's plans in the end have to start with 'me.' That's where we can make the change." I realize how true that is in myself. We can have some vision of what America might do, of what the president might do, of what this nation might do, the United Nations and elsewhere; but unless it starts in ourselves, then America is not going to change.

So I wanted to think with you just a brief moment this morning: What is it in ourselves that we can do to change? It can't be too big; otherwise we'll give up. There might be one point that God really would like us to change in ourselves and in our community right now. I've been thinking, I've been praying about that; "What is it that God would like to see transformed?"

Today's Bible reading is from the book of James: "Know this, my beloved brothers and sisters: Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for human anger does not produce the righteousness of God." So, "quick to hear"—what does that really mean? We've got to listen up, right? We've got to listen up to the voice of God. And for me it means being humble enough to realize that God's voice might come through anybody whatsoever. It doesn't even have to come from somebody I know or respect. It could be a complete stranger.

I'll give you an example. About a month ago, Fumiko and I joined an outreach program in White Plains, just a few miles from where we live. The district pastor, Andrew Compton, felt it would be a good idea to

follow up on the inspiration of God's Hope for America, the pilgrimage, by going out to tell people about it, old-style invite them to a luncheon program and share with them a few key points about the Divine Principle; and so we did ... and I didn't find anybody, that's the embarrassing truth. You can be the church president, doesn't mean you're any good at witnessing whatsoever. Fumiko is more inspired about that than I am. But I tagged along, and we did stop a lot of people; we met good people as well, but none of those came. But anyway, then it was time for the program; we went upstairs, we started eating lunch, and then nature called, and as I was walking down the corridor to the men's room, a couple of people came up the stairs and said, "Is this where the program is? We got a flyer."

You know how it is. My first thought was, "I'll invite you in, but after I go to the restroom." But God told me, "Don't you dare go to the restroom right now, welcome these people; I've sent them just for you." So I brought them in, they sat down and the program was already ongoing. Andrew asked people two questions. He said, "I'm going to break you into small groups and ask you two questions. Number one: What do you like most about America? Number two: What can you do to make this country better?"

Then we divided into groups of six or seven people, and one of these two new people, Tony, when it was his turn to share about "what can I do to make America better"—and I don't know but somehow the voice of God was speaking through him, because he said, "You know, I see so much wrong with this country. It overwhelms me every day, and I think I can't do anything, but then I see a single mother with children struggling to pay the bill at the grocery store, or I see a neighbor who needs a hand, and I realize I can help that person. In that way I can do something different that would make my portion of America better. There's no doubt about it; if I do that, that little part of America will be better. So that's what I do. I can't change everything, but I can do that."

I was kind of smitten by conscience, because honestly, as he said—and it may be true for all of us—there might be several occasions, at least, every week where there is an opportunity to make someone's life a little bit better, a little bit happier ... but we don't take it. We think we're too busy or that we can't do much, and so we do nothing. So this brand-new person, never seen him before, and I heard the voice of God saying, "That's not true. You can do something. I command you to do something. I want you to do something, and when you do, blessing will flow to you and to others as well."

Live Your Best Each Day

We have to be open to the voice of God to be quick to listen, to hear it. Then what's the second commandment? Be slow to speak. Don't be too quick to rationalize, to justify, to interpret; there's nothing worse than that for God. I was once told you should listen five times as much as you speak. My wife can tell you I have not mastered that technique, but the Bible commands us to be slow to speak, to think first about what we're going to say and what kind of things we're going to say.

At Hoon Dok Hae, most mornings we read from Joel Osteen's book, a simple book, *Your Best Life Each Morning*. I can't take Joel Osteen in long segments, but one page each morning is actually very good because almost always he's talking about how to have a grateful, thankful attitude, about seeing good things and positive things and leaving negative thoughts to yesterday.

I'm very prone to negative thoughts, so each morning I kind of need a fix to remind me I'm one of the most blessed people on Earth just to be alive at this time, to be alive at the time of True Parents. It's already a blessing. God has blessed me with a wonderful family. God has given me a job that I feel meaning in. God lets me live in America, a free country. Actually I am so blessed, and if I complain or feel depressed, it's actually an offense to God. It means I'm not seeing what I have; I'm not appreciating the blessing of heaven. So I should be slow and when I do speak, it should be to encourage others that blessings are coming.

Last Tuesday, I think it was, I was invited to join a national conference call. There was an opening prayer, and, my goodness, it was one of the most depressing prayers I have ever heard. I'm sure the person who prayed was so faithful, but all she talked about God facing so much suffering and difficulties and confusion and sickness and struggle. ... It was dreadful, but afterward I again felt the voice of God, who said, "You may not realize it, but if you don't say those words but if you think them, then to Me it sounds like that. I don't want to hear it."

God already knows, more than any of us, all those difficulties and struggles, but He doesn't want to hear it. What He wants to hear is how we can be grateful for what we have, how we can be positive about the blessings that we already have, and how we are going to move forward to bring God's Kingdom here in America?

God's Kingdom is an Ongoing Journey, not a Destination

I think most of us here joined this church because we had a belief, a vision, that God was going to build His Kingdom through us. Well, now many years have gone by, and you may be thinking, "Well, that

didn't quite work out." But God doesn't see it that way, because the Kingdom of God is not like a finish destination, like you arrive there and there it is. No, the Kingdom of God is ongoing; it's a question of relationship; it's a question of love; it's a question of growth inside.

Let me tell you a secret: You will never get there and be finished. It's always under construction. It's always unfolding and building ahead; otherwise how can it last for eternity? It only lasts for eternity because it's always growing, always developing. So in fact, building God's Kingdom remains today's work. Why True Father came to America wasn't to build the Unification Church or to create any particular church. It wasn't just to promote Christianity; True Father was always thinking of the role of all the religions. It was to encourage this nation to become a model of the Kingdom of God.

When True Father spoke at Yankee Stadium, he said, "The United States is already a model of the Kingdom of God. Not a perfect model, not a complete model, but already a model, because in this country people of every faith, every race, every language are living together in peace."

Imagine What We Can Do When We're United

Last Sunday I went to the 9/11 museum in New York City. It's only recently been opened, and it's such a moving and soul-stirring experience to go into that museum. As you enter, you see a re-creation of the morning of 9/11, at 8 a.m. when life was still normal. You see the newspapers of that morning with their headlines about the mayoral election, sports last night, things so mundane and normal. Then as you go in, you start to hear the first phone calls on the towers, the early radio reports full of confusion. Then people leaving voicemails—it was before smartphones and texts—leaving voicemails on each other's machines, including some people calling from the planes themselves, and gradually the whole incredible story unfolds.

There are so many memorials to the firefighters and first responders who gave their lives at the scene; so many artifacts from the collapse of the towers; so many stories of terrorism, of love, and in the end the experience is extremely redemptive. Even though it was such a terrible tragedy, you don't leave feeling depressed and shattered. You leave with a sense of strength of the resilience of America but also the resilience of people, how much we are really about to love each other, even in the most difficult of challenging circumstances.

Of course, we all hope that a day like that will not come again, but I think it's important to remind ourselves just how great and how powerful we can be when we really are united together in one purpose.

It brings us to the third point here: to be slow to anger. As president I get a lot of angry e-mails, and some of it escapes my trash bin, but I get so many letters from people who are angry about somebody else. They're angry about what so-and-so is doing or what that community over there is doing or what headquarters in Korea is saying, and I think to myself, this is not productive.

What Are *You* Going to Do?

There's no point whatsoever in being angry. When I write back to people, I thank them for their passion. I think it's a good thing to be passionate. It's a good thing to be righteous and not to like injustice, but complaining about it isn't going to get anywhere. I ask people, "What are you going to do to fix that problem? If you can't fix it in another city or another community, what are you going to do locally that will avoid that kind of difficulty?" I have not received one letter back. Not one, from anyone who complained in anger.

On the other hand, I get a full and varied correspondence from people who have great suggestions and great ideas about how we can improve our communication, how we can strengthen our families. I like to have those kinds of suggestions. I like for people to come with proposed solutions, even if they involve money, because these are people who are going to make things better.

New York is a long way away, but I think about Los Angeles a great deal. It's the No. 2 city in the nation. I want to see the Los Angeles Family Church being a great source of renovation and renewal in the entire United States. You're not just here for the city of Los Angeles. People from all over the world, when they come to America, including our own leaders—we just had a group from Korea—they all want to go to three places: Los Angeles, New York, and Washington, D.C.

I would like to see this community start stepping up to the plate and become one of the major destinations of inspiration and grace. I want to be able to send people here with confidence and say, "Go to our community in Los Angeles. There you'll see a community that is alive, grappling with the problems of the city of Los Angeles, providing solutions, providing hope to the families of Southern California, being an inspiration and a light to the communities all around. You are already, but I would like to challenge you to think big! To think that God is ready now to bless our community here, to increase it in size ten times or even a hundred times, not in ten or twenty years, but in a couple of years. The flood gates of

God's blessing are open.

That is possible when we unite together, when we keep the vision that God has a plan for America. It's a big plan that goes far beyond our movement. God has a plan for Los Angeles, and you, brothers and sisters, are key to that plan!

If there's truth in the Divine Principle, if there's meaning in the salvation through the Blessing and True Parents, then everyone in this auditorium is immeasurably important to God. I can't see your faces because of this spotlight in my eyes, but God sees them. God sees your face. God believes in you and your ability to bring transformation and change, so I want to thank you, I want to urge you to make this day, this month our re-birthday.

When True Father did the Madison Square Garden speech forty years ago last week, he said. "September 18 can be your re-birthday." He called upon the city of New York, the people of New York, to be reborn, to be revived, to find their true meaning as the sons and daughters of God. That call has to be renewed and repeated in our generation and in every city of America, especially here in Los Angeles. This could be the time of our re-birthday.

I've been wondering, "True Father, if you're alive in the spirit world, if you're ready to pour a Pentecost on America, when is it going to happen?" True Father told me, "I'm ready, but are you? I need you to be ready to speak out, to spread my word." Around America I've challenged people to do one simple thing: I've asked you to speak to at least one new person every day about God's vision for America.

Witnessing can't be something that a few people do on a Saturday or Sunday. Outreach has to be something natural that happens every single day. On the pilgrimage we got into that habit. We got into the habit of talking to one, and then two, or three people every day. After that, it's up to God to water that seed that you've planted, but if you don't plant the seeds, there can be no growth.

Pastor George [Kazakos] here, he's doing an excellent job, but he's just one man. Imagine if all of you in this auditorium today talked to one other person, shared with them, "You know, I have something important to share with you. God is alive. God is real. God has a plan for your family. He'd like to bless you, and here's how you start," and that is the change that needs to happen.

We used to be like that, let's be honest. We have got a little rusty. A whole community needs to take responsibility to help change that, and I think we can, I know we can. I've seen it across America's communities, inspiring just one person a day. True Mother has said that as well. Talk to one person a day. In a year how many people will you have talked to? Three hundred sixty-five, but actually it'll be more, because if those people start sharing, it can become a huge number.

So I'm going to challenge you this very day: why not do that? Talk to somebody. Your neighbor, somebody outside this theater, the person whom you buy gas from or groceries. Invite them to understand what God has in mind because God's hope is for all America, all Americans, all Angelinos, and He's counting on us to be His voice today.