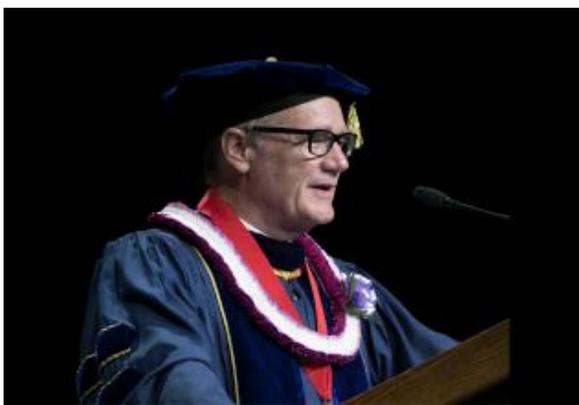


## Become Peacemakers



President John S. Tanner  
President of BYU–Hawaii  
Commencement  
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Today is a great day on campus. Commencement is my favorite day in the academic calendar. Tomorrow will be a great day on campus too, a historic day! Tomorrow President Russell M. Nelson will stand at this podium to conclude his world ministry tour. It is fitting that President Nelson’s global journey should end here, in Laie, at a university whose history and mission are intimately intertwined with the international Church. My talk today is inspired by the coincidence of BYU-Hawaii’s international mission and the prophet’s world tour.

Did you know that the origin of this university harks back to the very first round-the-world journey by a modern apostle, David O. McKay? Elder McKay stopped here in Laie on an apostolic journey around the world in 1921. This event is commemorated in the mural at the entrance to campus depicting David O. McKay at a flag-raising ceremony. What he witnessed there impressed him with a “vision” of a future college with an international mission and of the Church’s future as a “worldwide religion.”

When he beheld a “little group of students” gathered in unity around that flag pole, “Hawaiians, Haoles, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and Filipinos,” the heart of a Scotch apostle swelled with emotion and his eyes filled with tears. “There we met as one,” he says, “members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. What an example in this little place of the purpose of your Father in Heaven to unite all peoples by the gospel of Jesus Christ.” In his journal entry for that day, Elder McKay wrote: “the Church of Jesus Christ will truly make of all nations one blood. May God hasten the day when this is accomplished.”

This day is upon us! Mormonism has become a “worldwide religion.” President Nelson’s circumnavigation of the world dramatizes this. The newly announced temple in India puts an exclamation point on it. And you make the reality of the international Church visible. As you stood up a few minutes ago, we saw an image of a “worldwide religion” even more impressive than the one David O. McKay saw here almost a century ago.

My message today comes from a prophecy President McKay gave at our founding about you and your role in a worldwide religion. He said: “from this school, I’ll tell you, will go men and women whose influence will be felt for good toward the establishment of peace internationally.” My message is simple: **become the peacemakers President McKay envisioned.** [repeat]

The hard part is how. How can we become peacemakers in a world rife with wars and rumors of war, riven by violence, and often roiling in enmity and hate?

The answer is contained in what President McKay said just before he uttered this prophecy: “the gospel plan, as revealed by our Father in Heaven through His Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith, is the only plan by which the world, by obedience to it, may obtain peace.” The gospel holds the key to peace, whether international, interpersonal, or personal. We can become peacemakers by living and sharing the gospel plan.

Today I call your attention to two simple but profound truths of that plan, both essential for “the establishment of peace internationally.” The first truth is that the gospel embodies the “only plan by which the world . . . may obtain peace.” The gospel provides not a plan but the plan of happiness and peace.

The second truth is that we are all children of a Heavenly Father and hence brothers and sisters. We are one ohana as it were. Peace comes from treating each other as brothers and sisters. Let me briefly elaborate on these two principles.

First, the gospel provides the only plan for peace. Therefore, peacemakers in a global church must learn to weigh and balance the competing claims of diversity and unity.

The gospel net gathers people from many cultures. It teaches them to treasure their heritage, but also, where necessary, to transmute it. The gospel does not erase all cultural differences. We properly celebrate these differences here on campus and in the Church. At the same time, we invite everyone to shed cultural differences that are incompatible with a celestial culture. The gospel fosters diversity and unity. However, the end goal is not merely diversity but unity amid diversity: *e pluribus unum*. Out of many one.

President Nelson exemplified this priority on his global tour when he lovingly admonished the Saints in Africa to abandon certain dowry practices. Similarly, on the Indian subcontinent there exists the dowry practice of “bride burning” in which women are set on fire by their husbands or his family for refusal to pay additional dowry. Such a practice obviously cannot be condoned in the name of cultural diversity.

To become peacemakers internationally, you are going to need to be wise about how to balance less obvious but still important competing claims of unity and diversity. Peacemakers must learn to find unity amid diversity within the gospel plan for peace.

For me, the principle of unity amid diversity is symbolized in our flag circle. In the circle, flags from around the world are proudly and beautifully flown, each colorfully different, none higher or lower than the others. But all these diverse flags are united in a circle. I like to imagine the center of that circle as the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is why I asked that the manger scene be put inside the circle, to symbolize that all of us are centered on Christ, no matter our country of origin.

At this university, you have experienced gospel-grounded diversity. I hope that BYU–Hawaii has served, as President Marion G. Romney said it would, as “a living laboratory,” teaching you “to develop appreciation, tolerance, and esteem for one another.” Then he adds, “For what can be done here interculturally in a small way

is what mankind must do on a large scale if we are ever to have real brotherhood on this earth.”

Which brings mean to the second gospel principle essential to “the establishment of peace internationally”: namely, that we are all brothers and sisters of a Heavenly Father, who loves us and commands us to love each other. We are all family! Before we were born into different nations, languages, or ethnic groups, we were children of the same Father in Heaven. And we still are!

This simple truth has profound implications for each of us, whether in our political or personal lives. Let me cite one example. I have wrestled many times in my life with the question of war. During one such time, as the US was getting ready to go to war, I wondered what to say to my children. I finally decided to teach them this: **In God’s eyes all wars are civil wars.** This does not mean that there is no such thing as a just war or that He regards each side as moral equals. It does mean, however, that war is an inherently tragic way to resolve conflict. Everyone who dies on either side is His child and our brother or sister.

And it means that even just wars do not justify hate. For Jesus taught that we must love our enemies, including those who persecute us and spitefully use us.

All war is civil war because we are all “of one blood.” This phrase, which David O. McKay used in his journal after the flag ceremony, comes from Paul’s great discourse on Mars Hill. Paul taught skeptical Greeks that God was in fact our father; that He had created all nations “of one blood.”

Therefore, as Enoch learned, God weeps when his children hate and kill each other. Enoch asks “how is that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?”

“The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands.” I commanded them “that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood.”

There is the idea again. We are of one blood. Because we are spiritual blood brothers, all war is civil war in God’s eyes. Hence Heaven weeps when we hate and kill each other.

Living in the last days, you are destined to confront wars and rumors of wars. This will require you, as it has me, to make hard judgments about when a war is just and when it is not. And it will require you to love your enemies, for this commandment is universal and timeless truth of the gospel plan

So my dear graduates, I encourage you to take the lessons you have learned here to establish peace internationally. Remember that the gospel plan is the only plan that brings peace. Treasure diversity but be willing to place on the altar practices and traditions incompatible with celestial culture. Love and esteem all people as spiritual siblings, even your enemies.

Let me conclude with the opening lines of *Preach My Gospel*, which I love: “You are surrounded by people. You pass them on the street, visit them in their homes, and travel among them. All of them are children of God, our brothers and sisters. God loves them just as He loves you.”

As graduates from BYU–Hawaii may you remember that God loves others just as much as he loves you. A simple idea, but one that would change the world establish peace in the world if every person truly embraced it.