



Recognizing Our Inherent Worth

by Ron Harmon, Council of Twelve Apostles

As I write these words, there are protests in the streets of my country calling for racial justice, major crises across the globe including the spread of infectious diseases, Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo, gang violence in Central America, a global pandemic, extreme weather and climate change, increasing food and water insecurity, and global economic instability.

We face significant challenges to our shared future. Yet in the midst of this reality there is a movement toward nationalism. It is as though our social, economic, and environmental futures have no relationship to neighbors along our borders or across the globe. This trend in some nations threatens the existence of all life.

Jesus did not hesitate when asked what mattered most. He replied in Mark 12:29–30 NRSV:

...you shall love the Lord your God... [and] You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

Doctrine and Covenants 163:4 challenges us to:

...hear the pleadings of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children.

Our sacred texts do not call us to withdrawal and self-preservation. Author and theologian Walter Wink shares:

The issue is not “What must I do in order to secure my salvation?” but rather, “What does God require of me in response to the needs of others?” It is not “How can I be more virtuous?” But “How can I participate in the struggle of the oppressed for a more just world?”

Loving our neighbor is more than an occasional act of kindness. It is a missional imperative, lived in a deep awareness of God’s everlasting love for all humanity.

I recently heard a young adult in northern California share a moving testimony:

I chose to be baptized because I knew that God had love for me, and I was worthy like everyone else, regardless of who I presented myself as, regardless of what I looked like, and regardless of if I was a perfect Christian. I knew that God found me just as worthy as anyone else. I chose to be confirmed in Community of Christ because I knew those same principles that were equally true of God were emphasized by us. We recognize that every person is of worth, and everyone belongs.

When we recognize our inherent worth, we not only have the capacity but are compelled to “restore and uphold the Worth of All Persons, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.” In short, we are freed to truly love your neighbor as yourself. We understand that our future is linked inextricably to our neighbor’s future, and that together we can envision and enact that future into being.

As I look to our future, I see neighborhoods, villages, and cities transformed by our courage to invite many more people to the table, break bread, share our lives, and dream of what could be. I see an awakening to our global interdependence where we come together to listen, learn, and solve our greatest challenges—locally and globally.

I believe this is the essence of who we are and are called to become—signal communities that live, love, and share as Zion, where there are no poor or oppressed. This is the Worth of All Persons in action. This is the compelling vision that is worth all we have to give.

