

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rob Rolfe • 619 S. State, Lamoni, IA 50140 • 515-784-6030

Hot Muffins

I like muffins. I particularly like muffins that are just taken out of the oven and eaten with a little butter while hot. There is nothing like the smell of muffins or bread on a cold day. A few years ago an unnamed member of our family baked some muffins. They came out of the oven looking beautiful. I remember they were a golden brown color. The taste was horrid, however. Baking soda had been substituted for baking powder. Every other ingredient was correct, but that one change ruined the entire batch of muffins.

Most of us wouldn't think of challenging the laws of gravity or inertia. When it come to the spiritual law, however, we act as if we can change the ingredients and "get away with it." One basic rule of the gospel is, "violate God's law and you will pay"! There is always a price for sin. We simply can't get away from changing the ingredients of the gospel.

Jesus warned his disciples about this principle in different ways. On one occasion he told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. They thought he was telling them about the "leaven" because they had forgotten to bring some bread (And that's not the only thing they didn't understand.)

Leaven corrupts by puffing up. It is an excellent metaphor for pride. Pride corrupts by puffing up. The leaven of the Pharisees may make us believe we are really something, but leaves us empty spiritually. It looks real, but is actually only the appearance of the real thing.

Remember the principle of the leaven during the holiday season. What is it, during this season, that makes us puffed up? We pay for many things at this time of year. Make sure that you only "pay" for the leaven that brings growth, rather than a "horrid taste."

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

November

Communion Service

Robert Rolfe was in charge with Kathy Akers at the piano during the November Communion service at Mount Ayr. Brother Rolfe introduced the service explaining that he does not think it was an accident that the Lord chose eating and drinking as a way for us to remember Him and his death on the cross since these are such elemental parts of all our lives. "It's also prophecy", he said, "since just before He was crucified, He said He would not eat of the bread and drink of the cup until He is with us in His kingdom. Then He will sit down - that's one of the promises, that we will be able to sit down with our Lord and eat and drink with Him. I'm looking forward to that!" he declared, "If food tastes this good in a pot luck, it has to be better in the Kingdom!"

He further stated, "A we enter into our service, I would like to have you come to a good understanding with the Holy Spirit, make what repentance you my not have already made and just enjoy the spirit of worship as we worship together.

Ronald and Di Smith were joined by Cara Smith, home from the University of Missouri for the weekend, in singing a medley of praise hymns. "Jesus, Name Above All Names", "Fairest Lord Jesus", and "Lord, You Are More Precious Than Silver - Nothing I desire compares with You!" focused our thoughts on our reason for being together at that time. Prayers were offered by Priesthood previously prepared for the ministry. Gordon Winkler prayed or our preparation to remember the sacrifice of our Lord that we may have opportunity to have everlasting life, especially recalling the testimony the scriptures and God's servants bear of our need for repentance that we might be able to inherit eternal life. Steven Smith prayed for families, and in doing so prayed for each family present, single individuals, single parent families and two parent families, each by name. George Knotts prayed for spiritual renewal for those of this congregation that they might be anxious for nothing but to trust their Lord. He prayed for spiritual discipline of this people in fasting, prayer and study that we might be a mighty force for good among those our lives may touch. We all sang "The Lord's My Shepherd" and "Jesus Is Calling" before the offering was received by Ben Mitchell and Akela Galusha.

In introducing that portion of the service, Brother Rolfe assured us that the Lord is asking us to give for our own benefit, not His. If He could have His disciples take a coin from a fish's mouth to pay their taxes, He certainly does not really need our money. By way of testimony, he told how he and Lynda began their marriage. "Lynda and I filed our first tithing statement together thirty years ago, and when we did, we owed a lot of money. We were starting Graceland that fall. We had bought enough food for a month, and paid for our books, and we had enough money to pay our tithing. So we talked about it and paid our tithing even though we would be broke when we did. We didn't think anything more about it because we expected that was what the Lord wanted us to do. A short time later, we got a letter that Lynda was going to inherit just about exactly ten times what we had given! Now, I'm not going to tell you that God will give you back ten times everything you give. He will bestow on us ten times, but not necessarily in money. The Lord blesses us if we obey His law and follow what His Son, Jesus Christ has taught us to do. In Rob's prayer, he acknowledged that we are rich in things, but, he feared poor in spirit. His prayer for us was that God would help us become rich in Spirit as well as in things. Ron and Di sang again, giving us what Brother Rolfe described as our last opportunity at this service to prepare ourselves for the indwelling of the Lord's Spirit. This time they sang:

"The Savior is waiting to enter your heart. Why don't you let Him to come in? There's nothing in this world to keep you apart. What is your answer to him?"

Time after time He has waited before. And now he is waiting again. To see if you're willing to open the door. Oh, how He wants to come in!

If you'll take a step toward the Savior, my friend, you'll find His arms opened wide" followed by:

"Sweet is the feeling I have repented, reached in the past and righted my wrong. ---

Sweet is the feeling I am forgiven, washed in His mercy, new in His sight.

Kind is my Savior, --- and tender. Urging me softly into the night.

Warm is the sunlight after the dawning. Gone are my sins in Christ's blessed name. ---

These are the hands I raise to His blessing. Here is my song, all praise to His name."

The Lord's Supper was served, Kent Clisby and Gerald Bolingbroke offering the Communion prayers and serving the emblems.

Alan Smith brought the verbal message of the morning. He began by saying, with barely suppressed emotion, "I am not sure that anything more needs to be said."

"But I would like to remind us that as we come to share in the Lord's Supper, we could also label this a healing service. I don't know if you ever thought about it that way, but that is what I have been thinking this week in preparation for coming together. When we come together for the Lord's Supper, we come remembering what He has done to make us well spiritually and physically. We come to heal our relationship with our heavenly Father. We come in repentance, remembering the covenant which we have made with Him. We come to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit which brings us back into right relationships with God and with each other. We come to be healed. Is that how you've come this morning? Is there something in your life that needs to be healed?"

"We come in praise like David in the 103rd. Psalm, 'Bless the

Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth all thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.'

"We come to remember what Christ has done that we might be healed as Isaiah reveals in the 53rd chapter, and it is also repeated in Mosiah 8. 'Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.'

And we come to remember the promise of healing we seek. It's not just for ourselves but for His world as we are reminded in Second Chronicles 7:14. 'If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land.'

"When Jesus was here, and His disciples, as recorded in the scriptures, people came to him in many ways seeking healing in their lives. There were people who were afraid to ask, like the woman who touched the hem of His garment. For twelve years she had had an issue of blood, and she had spent all that she had on doctors trying to be healed, and yet, when Jesus came through, she felt if she could only touch His garment she would be healed. Maybe she was afraid to ask after all this time. Maybe she didn't want to bother Him, but Jesus knew when she was healed and looked for her. 'And when the woman found that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.'

"There were others who came to Jesus and approached Him and asked to be healed. Luke 5 tells about the man who was 'full of leprosy, who, seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him saying, I will; be thou clean. and immediately the leprosy departed from him.' And Jesus told him to go show himself to the priests and go through the process of being welcomed back into the community. And 'so much the more went there a fame abroad of him; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.'

"Some people came to Jesus to be healed as part of a trap, but Jesus healed them anyway. We don't know that they were a part of the trap, but at least people bringing them were. Behold, there was a man that had a withered hand. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and it shall fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it and lift it out? How much more then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days. Then said he to the man, Stretch forth thy hand; and he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole, like the other'.

"Some people couldn't get to Jesus by themselves. Someone else had to help like the man that is recorded in the fifth chapter of Luke that was let down through the ceiling. Jesus was teaching. People were coming out of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem to hear

Him, and the power of the Lord was present with Him to heal them, the scriptures tell us. And a man brought in a bed who had palsy was brought forth and was to be laid down in front of Jesus so that he could be healed, too; but the press of the multitude was so great that they had to take tiles out of the roof and let him down to Jesus. 'And he said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thy house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear saying, We have seen strange things today.'

"Some weren't even in the same place that Jesus was when they were healed like the centurion's servant who was dying and was dear to him. The elders of the Jews came to Jesus and asked him to do the healing because this was a good man. He had built them a synagogue and he loved the Jews, the elders told Jesus. So Jesus went with them and they met the Centurion not far from his home; and the centurion said, 'Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. Wherefore, neither thought myself worthy to come unto thee; but say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go and he goeth; and to another Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said to the people who followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And they who were sent, returning to the house found the servant whole who had been sick.'

"Other times Jesus healed people who He called to Him by special invitation as He did in Third Nephi 8:6-11: 'And he said unto them, Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you. Have you any sick among you? Bring them hither. Have you any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner, bring them hither, and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; My bowels are filled with mercy; for I perceive that ye desire that I should shew unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem, for I see that your faith is sufficient, that I should heal you. And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth, with their sick, and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all they that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them everyone as they were brought forth unto him; And they did all, both they who had been healed, and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; And as many as could come, for the multitude, did kiss his feet, in so much that they did bathe his feet with their tears.'

"Jesus even brought healing when people thought it was too late. Remember the story of Jairus's daughter and the raising of Lazarus? But Jesus didn't only heal physically as people came to him. That same man that had been let down through the ceiling with the palsy, I didn't read you the whole story. Luke 5:19-26 - When they 'let him down through the tiling with his couch, into the midst, before Jesus', Jesus 'saw their faith, and said unto the man, Thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? But Jesus perceived their thoughts, and said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Does it require more power to forgive sins than to make the sick rise and walk? But, that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive

sins, I said it. And he said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take thy couch, and go to thy house.'

Jesus recognized that we need healing of more than just our physical bodies when we come to him, but healing of our souls as well. Just as the lady who had been taken in adultery who had been brought before him before the people who were going to stone her to death. Jesus was there, and after he had written on the ground and offered that the person without sin was to cast the first stone, Jesus looked up and said, 'Woman, where are your accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more. And the woman glorified God from that hour, and believed on his name. (John 8:1-11.)'

"The promise that we have of healing in James 5:14-16 speaks both of physical and spiritual healing. 'Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess you faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'

"When we come to the Communion service, the Lord asks us to come to be healed. One of the things He tells us to do is to go make right anything that we have against our brothers or sisters before we come. I just quickly would like to share a testimony with you of a Communion service that I was in where some healing took place.

"When we were in Ottumwa we had a letter from a lady who said that she wanted her name taken off the rolls of the church. She had been attending the Baptist church and had heard how the Book of Mormon was bad; and even though she had read in it a little bit and knew something about it, she had believed what she had heard most recently. She wrote in her letter all the things she felt were wrong, and asked that her name be taken from the rolls. A couple of years later, we happened to get in touch with her again and shared with her, and her heart changed. She asked if she could come back into the fellowship. Arrangements were made for a special Communion service where she was welcomed back as part of the church family. And to this day, she and her family are strong supporters of the church in Ottumwa. What joy in healing we shared in that Communion service, as she repented and came back into the fellowship that she felt was so dear!

"Jesus is saying the same thing today. In Doctrine and Covenants 6:16a-c, 'Therefore fear not, little flock, do good, let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my Rock, they cannot prevail. Behold, I do not condemn you, go your ways and sin no more; perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you; look unto me in every thought, doubt not, fear not: behold the wound which pierced my side, and also the print of the nails in my hands and feet, be faithful; keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.'

"Have you come to be healed this morning? Will you let the power of Christ heal your heart and heal your body this hour? However you come, whether you can't say the word, whether you have to come with the help of a friend, whether all you can do is touch His garment; whether you have someone who will say, 'Just say the word and I know it will be', I hope this is truly an experience of healing for you this morning. 'Pick up your bed and walk.' 'Go and sin no more'. These words of Jesus are speaking to whatever need you have this morning. May our eyes be opened. May our ears be unstopped. May our mouths be allowed to speak. May we have

the strength we need. May we lay aside every sin that would easily beset us, and may we share in the joy of the pure love of Christ - the fruit that truly fills all the voids in our lives as we share in the Spirit and the gift of His Spirit as we leave His table today to serve Him.”

The Ancient benediction, ‘The Lord bless and keep you. The Lord lift his countenance upon you and give you peace. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. Amen!’ was pronounced by our Pastor and we sang together, “Blest are the pure in heart, For they shall see our God; The secret of the Lord is theirs. Their soul is his abode.”

Stay Close to the Scriptures

Elder Gerald Bolingbroke is a minister who believes strongly in the gospel of Jesus as restored to us through Joseph Smith, Jr. The sermon he presented on Sunday, November 9, 2003, is evident of his testimony of the truthfulness of that gospel.

Brother Bolingbroke began his sermon by reading a Scripture to us from the Inspired Version of the Bible, Galatians 3:24-29: “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster until Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

All that we have is a gift from God. The world does not exist separate from God. We are told in Section 85 of the Doctrine and Covenants that Christ is in and through all things. He is the light of truth “which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also He is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also He is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made. And the light which now shineth is through Him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings, which light proceedeth from the presence of God, to fill the immensity of space.”

Christ is filled with light. This is the opposite to being filled with darkness. Those who love darkness, usually love it because of the evil acts they can perform when others cannot see them. An example of this can be seen when we notice how dark taverns are. As the patrons enter there and consume alcohol, they lose the light of Christ. Evil loves darkness.

Christ is the creator of all. He started the universe by means of a huge explosion. Astronomers have analyzed the creation event. They still do not know everything, but they do know that the universe is moving outward, it is expanding. Because of their understanding of the nature of the universe, they know that some great explosion must have occurred to cause the galaxies to be moving away from each other. What caused the Big Bang to occur and why is there more matter rather than antimatter? If there were equal amounts of matter and antimatter, they would quickly come together and produce a lot of energy. So much energy that life could not exist.

Some men think that they are self-made, that they came into

existence by pure chance. Pride is the basis of this belief. It is sin that men think this way. We must realize our dependence on God. He has told us “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” We do not exist separate from others. We have heard of stories where children are kept chained in a closet without anyone around during the day. Usually they are found out many years later. When the children are found they are more like animals. They do not have the power of speech or the development of personality. These children are scarred for life. Our personalities are a product of what the human race has made available to us. This is done through our contacts with persons in the past, and in the present.

We are the body of Christ. When one of our members suffer, we suffer too.

As the Apostle Paul said in Romans 12: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to the world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another. Let love be without dissimulation, Abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”

In some ways we are sick because our society is sick. Some people have grown up disliking different races or nationalities. And some people in our society do not believe that homosexuality is a sin. It is very important that we know what the Scriptures say. We are told that we need the scriptures. The Mulekites did not bring records or scriptures with them when they arrived in the Americas. In the Book of Mormon, Omni 1:22-30, we find these words:

And they departed out of the land into the wilderness, as many as would hearken unto the voice of the Lord; and they were led by many preachings and prophesyings. And they were admonished continually by the word of God: and they were led by the power of his arm, through the wilderness, until they came down into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla. And they discovered a people, who were called the people of Zarahemla. Now, there was great rejoicing among the people of Zarahemla; and also, Zarahemla did rejoice exceedingly, because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass which contained the record of the Jews. Behold, it came to pass that Mosiah discovered that the people of Zarahemla, came out from Jerusalem, at the time that Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon. And they journeyed in the wilderness, and were brought by the hand of the Lord, across the great waters, into the land where Mosiah discovered them; and they had dwelt there from that time forth. And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, they had become exceeding numerous. Nevertheless, they had had many

wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time; And their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them.”

In the Book of Mormon in Mosiah we find that if it were not for the records they would have dwindled in unbelief. In Mosiah 1:3-9 we find these words:

And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord. And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying, My sons, I would that ye should remember, that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God: For it were not possible that our father Lehi could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates: For he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians, therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time. I say unto you, my sons, Were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, And we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct. O my sons, I would that ye should remember that these sayings are true; and also, that these records are true.”

Jesus calls us to serve. Jesus Christ came into the world to bring salvation. It was his purpose to bring health to the human race, and we can also bring health to society. Jesus speaks of the health of mankind as inherent in keeping the two great commandments. Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two hang all the law and the prophets” Matthew 22: 36-39.

Jesus himself set the example for us by coming to Earth and taking on humanity. He took on our sins and the sins of the world. The sinful human race does not want to give up its sin, so it is condemned to the tragedy of its own disease. Jesus spoke about this in the following scripture: “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He who believeth on him is not condemned; but he who believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the Only Begotten Son of God, which before was preached by the mouth of the holy prophets; for they testified of me. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one who doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he who loveth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest. And he who obeyeth the truth, the works which he doeth they are of God.” John 3: 17-22

From the book *A Remarkable Vision* by J. C. Clapp, we find a marvelous testimony the importance of staying close to the Scriptures.

Joseph (J.C..) Clapp was ordained at a meeting held in his home. Several of the Saints stayed all night, so it was necessary for J.C.. to sleep in a closet on a pallet on the floor. He set a lighted candle on the floor at the head of his bed. Although it was very late, he began reading the Doctrine and Covenants. He had read the book before, but this time it was like a new book. The phrase “Thus saith the Lord” seemed to pierce his very soul. J.C.. began to wonder, “Is it possible that this is God talking? Does He, or will He talk to the people now, as He used to in former days?”

While he solemnly meditated upon the subject, the answer came to him as though a voice had really spoken. He slipped the book under his pillow, blew out the candle, and with a silent prayer committed himself to God. He was immediately wrapped in a most delightful vision. He could say as Paul did, “I saw things that were not lawful to utter.”

One thing, he saw that he could describe was the martyred prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., as plainly as he ever saw him in natural life. His size, features, and general makeup were quite natural, but he seemed to be almost transparent. He stood by a little stand or table, about a yard square. The prophet Joseph Smith III, who was the Church prophet at the time this vision was given, stood on his left. The martyr picked up a book from that stand (J.C.. thought it was the Doctrine and Covenants) and handed it to his son. As he did so, J.C.. noticed the book had an alabaster appearance. While he could see the martyr’s fingers plainly, he could see the book right through his fingers.

Joseph the martyr handed the book to J.C.. and said, “My Son, I want you to teach this book to the people. For as long as the people go according to these books, they will never go astray or be deceived.” As he said this, he pointed to the two other books that lay on another little stand just to the left of young Joseph. J. C. believed they were the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Joseph the martyr added, “For out of these cometh judgment.” This remark seemed so strange that J.C.. immediately awoke or attained a normal condition. He was amazed beyond all his powers to describe. He spent the night in praising the Lord. He now knew that the work was true and that the sentences which had so pierced his heart while he read the Doctrine and Covenants were the voice of the Lord.

After this J. C. began doubting his abilities. He had never written a line in school; he had never done an example in mathematics; he had never had a lesson in English grammar. Then he imagined himself standing before the people to preach. This thought almost destroyed him. He was farming on a farm 10 miles southeast of Los Angeles. He said that instead of launching out as he ought to have done, he, like Jonah, ran away and went out into Mexico or Arizona. However, he got sick and came home. He thought he was about to die.

Dr. Peacock of San Bernardino pronounced him as suffering from dropsy of the heart. After the doctor made a thorough diagnosis of his case, he said he could do nothing for him. Brothers Alexander H. Smith and William Anderson came and administered to J.C., and he got better, but after they left, he relapsed into the same condition. He got so much worse that everyone despaired on his recovery. Dr Peacock said that he would live only a few days at most. J.C.. also felt that life was ebbing away. J.C.’s heart seemed to be drowning in fluid, and it was struggling very hard. J.C.. told his mother that he thought the end was coming. He said that he was not afraid, only that he regretted very much that his life had been so wasted.

He saw his mother and sister Nannie, a girl about 14 years of age, standing with streaming eyes. All at once, Nannie stepped up to their mother and said, "Mother, in the name of the Lord, be comforted, for Joseph is not going to die at this time." She then turned to Joseph and delivered one of the most soul-piercing prophecies he had ever heard in his life. She said, "Verily, thus saith the Lord, thy sickness is not unto death. For I have a work for thee to do-- a mission for thee to perform. Thy voice shall be heard in the congregation of the wicked, and upon the islands of the sea thou shalt lift up the standard of truth. Tens of thousands shall hear thy testimony, and thousands shall be made glad because of thy ministry."

These words from a bashful little girl were so powerful that it seemed the very foundations of the house trembled. He was immediately healed. He rose up and praised God, bearing testimony to the truth. He went into town soon after and saw the old doctor, who confessed that the healing was the power of God and not of man.

At the end of Brother Bolingbroke's sermon, he voiced his hope that each one of us will stay close to the teachings in the scriptures so none of us will be lost. He said, "We are the body of Christ. We depend on God for everything. Let us thank Him for this gospel and what it teaches, to care for one another, is my prayer."

Encouragement

Gordon Winkler read a short scripture, to which he promised to return several times during his sermon. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). "Contained in this one verse is a recap and a simplification of Christ's message in God's plan of salvation." Gordon explained. "Did you recognize that? As Jesus told his disciples, 'These things I have spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.' (John 16:25). Jesus was making reference to the fact that during the time that He had been with His disciples, they had been in many different meetings, groups and places, and He had preached in proverbs, or as we tend to call them, parables. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record twenty to forty parables some found in only one place, some in more than one and some found in Matthew, Mark and Luke. John seems to have recorded only a couple of them. We don't have enough time to go through all of those parables, but I would like to kind of paraphrase a few of them a bit and tell you where they are, because it sets the background for what Jesus was saying there in John.

"The parable of the good Samaritan is found in Luke 10:31-38. I'm sure that is familiar to you, but the parable goes somewhat that a certain man was passing through and was set upon by robbers and thieves. They stole from him, took his raiment, beat upon him and left him half dead along the side of the road. The first person who came by was a priest, and the priest passed by on the one side of him and kept on his journey. The second person that came by was a Levite -somebody in good standing at that time in that community- and he passed by him on the other side. Both of those people were hoping that no one would recognize that they had gone by and left him there. I guess they were hoping that the gentleman would die so he could not bring to the attention of others that they had left him

there by the side of the road. But the Samaritan stopped, picked him up, bound his wounds, poured in wine and oil, took him to an inn and took care of him as long as he could be there. Then, knowing that he couldn't be there any more, said to the innkeeper, 'Would you continue to care for him; and if it costs more than this money I am leaving with you, the next time I come through, I will pay you the difference. So the message Jesus is trying to get across is answering the question of who is your neighbor or who is your friend. The answer to that was the Samaritan, even though Samaritans were the lowliest of society, he was the friend because he stopped and took care of the injured man.

"Another parable that Jesus talked about in Matthew 25:1-12 is the parable of the ten virgins. You remember that parable goes that there were ten who gathered oil in their lamps and were waiting for the bridegroom to come. Five were wise and took extra oil with them. Five had only the oil in their lamps. At midnight, when they were all asleep, the bridegroom came. The foolish virgins' lamps had gone out and they had no more oil. When the message came that the bridegroom was coming, they were scuffling about trying to borrow oil and trying to buy oil and eventually missed the bridegroom's coming. The point of that parable is that we need to watch because we know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man will come. We must be prepared.

"In the fifteenth chapter of Luke, sometimes referred to as the chapter of the lost, there is the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the prodigal son. The parable of the prodigal son is in the eleventh through the thirty second verses and is probably one of my favorite parables. It goes, a man had two sons. One was devoted to the father and did everything that the father asked him to do. The other was always wanting to see what went on in the world. And at the time that the father divided up his inheritance to each one of the sons, one son left, spent all that he had, lived a riotous life for that time, and then recognized that he had no way to support himself, and that he was in ruin. He looked into himself and said, 'No matter what happens to me, even if I have to be my father's servant, I am going to go home.' The father welcomed him back and they had the feast. At the end of the 32nd verse the father says, 'Thy brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.' The parable talks about how God feels about each one of us when we return to Him.

"A similar message is contained in the parable of the lost sheep which is in verses 3 through 6 of that chapter. The story is that the shepherd leaves the flock of ninety and nine and to go and find the one that was lost. After finding the lamb, he returns with the lamb and says, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.'

"In Matthew 5:16-18 is the parable of the candle. Verse 16 - 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candle stick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house. Therefore, let your light so shine before the world, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.' " Brother Winkler especially noted that Jesus said, "I give unto you to be THE light. It didn't say, a light. It says THE light, which would indicate that there is only one way - only one light; and that would be the light of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Speaks Plainly

"These and many other parables, or proverbs, the disciples had heard. Now Jesus was preparing them for the end of His time in the world. 'His disciples said unto him, Lo now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.' (John 16:29). In other words, 'Tell us

straight out, and make it simple. We want to make sure that we get it!' So the first thing that Jesus tells them, recorded in the 33rd verse, is 'These things I have spoken unto you, that In me ye might have peace.' We have the opportunity for peace through Jesus Christ. We will have peace if we keep God's commandments and follow Jesus' teachings; if we recognize all of the lessons that are contained in those parables that Jesus shared with His disciples and with the multitude in the meeting places in which He had been.

"The second thing that Jesus tells them, speaking plainly, is that in the world ye will have tribulation. There wasn't a couching in that saying you might have problems, or things might not go your way, or somebody is going to disagree with you. He says plainly, 'In the world you will have tribulation.' Jesus didn't come to remove all the problems, all the illnesses, all the persecution that is in the world - things that we think are bad. Instead He says, 'I will help you through them'. They are mere bumps along the road, is what Jesus is telling us; although, for some of us at some times they seem more like boulders of cliffs. They are really a distraction from allowing us to keep focused on the goal of eternal life. Jesus said that we are going to have those. He didn't come to remove them, but He came to help us along that path. Jesus knows that it will be better, because He overcame the world. He was here. He understands and he offers us solutions.

"Lastly, he says, 'Be of good cheer. Be encouraged. If you do these things - if you follow My teachings - if you look past the tribulations, those bumps along the road, you have something wonderful ahead of you. So be encouraged about that!'

Our Need For Encouragement

"In our time this morning, I would like to talk about encouragement. I don't think it is a surprise to any of you here that we live in a world of turmoil. If you believe that, you can testify that Jesus was correct when he said, in the world, you would have tribulations. Wars are being fought all over the world. The one that is most in our minds and in our attention is the war that is going on in Iraq. Even over the past Wednesday nights, we prayed for Bob Bell and Jim Fisher, and I'm sure there are others that we know involved in the military effort in Iraq, and we have prayed for them. We would like for them to be protected and arrive safely home. Even in our own country we have developed a terror alert system that wasn't even heard of two years ago. Now green, amber and red are a part of our national vocabulary. Prior to today, if we had asked anybody about those three colors, they would have said they were the description of a stop light; but now they mean so much more and are of such greater significance to our world!

"In fact at the hospital, we have a disaster preparedness plan, as do all hospitals across the state of Iowa. It includes responses to bio-terrorism. It talks about vaccine availability and antiserum, where we would get those and how much we would keep on hand. It talks about the communications system. In fact, the state has given each hospital a radio, and the frequency is such that nobody else is on it. If we get a call on that radio, we know that we are supposed to implement our disaster preparedness plan. We have really invested much more resources in what we call personal protective equipment. We now have portable, self contained showers so that if we get contaminated with something, we can wash off and the water is contained in the basin until it can be pumped into another system that eliminates exposure. We participate in state-wide table top disaster drills and mobilize resources and medical help. And all of that wasn't even considered a couple of years ago. That's just some of the turmoil that the incidence of the trade towers

being destroyed and war in Iraq has upon our society.

"There's another war being waged inside our towns and our cities. It is a war on our culture. One culture says, 'Do what you want to do, and don't think about the consequences, because the only thing that counts is your individual happiness.' Have you heard that? Are you aware that it's going on? Another culture is professing the greatest virtue in life is tolerance. Have you heard the word tolerance talked about? We should be tolerant towards all people and all ideas no matter how detrimental it might be to the person or to our communities, because all that matters is that they have an experience and a journey through life that is important. Well, if you are tolerant of everything, how will the world be reconciled to Christ? There are obviously things that shouldn't be tolerated that we're asked to tolerate. We must find ourselves in a position so that we can recognize that and stand up against those things.

"Closer to home, we are aware of tribulations in our own congregation, and in our own associations. We have shared prayers about many of those in the past months. We have tribulations in some of the marriages in our congregation's family, and our hearts go out to Dan and Beth and to Heather and Sam; and we pray that reconciliation and the Spirit of God might enter back into those marriages and help save those families. And we pray for families, and I think about Cede and Ammon and other families. We pray for Carlos and Julie's sister Jennifer and their situation. We don't realize the importance that families have and the strength that we gain from families until we see those who don't have a family. I have noticed over the years, the times that we have been associated closely with young people who have been associated with our children, in particular those that come from families that are dysfunctional, that are single parent - families that have gone through divorce and remarriage and divorce and remarriage, how they gravitate to us. They don't know for sure what's different about us, but they know that there's something different about being a family as opposed to the situation that they are in. I think that's something that we need to pray about.

"We have prayed for others that are going through turmoil because of unemployment. We've prayed for Ed and for Harold and will continue to pray for them. We have also prayed for those who are going through turmoil with sickness, illness and the aging process. We have prayed for Valle, her family and her brother Kim. And we have prayed for Delbert and for Helen Bastow, and we recognize that those are tribulations.

"There are other things that I would consider to be tribulations. One is the breakup of the church. We think of that as being the separation from the RLDS church and COC, but that's been going on for years. There have been divisions and separations off from the original design of the church that was set up by Joseph Smith. That creates tribulations for us every time there is a breakup as we try to sort through trying to determine which things are important. Why was there a breakup? Do we understand the issues? With which side are we going to stay. All of that creates turmoil in our world.

"Rob has told me he has been rereading church history, so I was kind of thumbing through history the other night. I was in volume 2, chapter 33, the time frame was leading up to the assassination of Joseph and Hyrum. There was a headline from the Times and Seasons reprinted there, from July 1, 1844. It says, 'Awful assassination of Joseph and Hyrum Smith! The pledged faith of the state of Illinois stained with innocent blood by a mob.' Don't you think that was tribulation and of concern for the Saints at that time?

"When we lived in Iowa city, I worked for the University of

Iowa in an area called the Clinical Research Center. It was a laboratory where we did a number of assays, high pressure liquid chromatography and radio-amino assays. Basically, what we did was we found ways to put labels on different hormones and measure them, and to do investigation studies on growth hormones, on brain hormones, ACTH and cortisol. One of the people that worked in the lab was an interesting older lady whose name was Margaritte. Margaritte had quite a story. She was a young girl, growing up at the time of Nazi Germany. Margaritte and her sister hid out while they watched their parents being taken away to a concentration camp by the Nazis. She told me of the times that they were with friends and times they were with people they didn't know - just people who looked out for her and her sister. They were hidden out and moved around all over into Eastern Europe and into Russia. Margaritte found a way she thought that would offer the best opportunity for her and her sister. They stowed away on a ship headed for the United States. In the shuffle of the crowds and trying to get moved around and be inconspicuous, the girls became separated. Margaritte came to the United States, and never saw her sister again. She grew up not knowing for sure what happened to her parents, knowing that somewhere between the United States and Russia, she lost her sister and never found her again. Do you think that would be a tribulation to have to overcome?

“The book of James 1:2-4 says, ‘My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into many afflictions; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.’ That’s what James says about tribulations - the testing of our faith, and we need to be patient; but what a tough thing to be patient about! You don’t know what happened to your family or where your sister is!

Where Does Encouragement Come In?

There are many, many examples of tribulation, but I said I wanted to talk about encouragement. I was reminded of a story about a guy who asked a therapist how he could find peace in the midst of all his problems. She told him the way to achieve inner peace is finish what you start. He reported that so far today he had finished two bags of chips and a chocolate cake and was feeling better already! Potato chips and chocolate cake are not the encouragement we need to face the discouragement that satan has set in our world. Have you ever had the experience of being out someplace and your car won’t start. The battery is dead! Usually that occurs at an inconvenient time and at an inconvenient location. Your thirty six month battery is on its 42nd month, and the temperature is 10 below zero. It’s eight o’clock at night and you are sitting at the school parking lot or at the mall. The solution to not having a spare battery is to convince someone in another car to pull up alongside yours and hook up a set of jumper cables from their strong battery to your weak or dead battery. Drawing energy and power off the second battery, the car is able to start up again. I think that act of drawing alongside or lending energy to get another going again is the idea behind encouragement. There are times for each of us when our batteries are run down or dead. Encouragement means the coming along side and the inputting of courage or perspective or attitude that make us get up and get going again. People have done it for us in the past, and we need to do it for others.

“But where do you find encouragement? I have a partial list here, but I’m sure that there are others. I started my list out with parents. When I thought about my parents, and thought about being a parent, I thought that not always is encouragement well received. I got to thinking that maybe that’s because it’s not usually just

encouragement. It’s usually mixed with some advice. For instance, we might offer words of encouragement and end it with, ‘Well, you need to practice more, you need to study more, or, if you are home earlier, it would go better.’

“I remember one time at a Junior High football game, a mother encouraging her seventh grade son on. It was a play when a ball came loose and everyone was scrambling around. This little guy picks it up and starts running. You could hear that mother yelling, ‘Go! Go! Go! Run! Run! Run!. He gets all the way down to the other end and the coach is there motioning him to run the other way. He had picked the ball up and run the wrong direction. He was getting plenty of encouragement from his mother, but he was rather embarrassed after the game when he found out what his mother was doing in the stands and that he had run the wrong way.

“I remember my mother encouraging me, just as I have been encouraging Heidi recently. Heidi has been having to write a number of papers and essays, some for scholarships - some for school projects, and learning to write is not an easy thing. Trying to get down on paper what is in your mind in an organized fashion for some people isn’t easy. It wasn’t for me. I had to work hard to become a writer and I’m slow at it now. It takes me awhile to get things written. But my mom sat at the kitchen table with me and helped me to write. I remember those agonizing times as they were. I did it with Melissa, and sitting at the table with Heidi, I’m sure she thinks it’s agonizing, too. Melissa used to tell me, ‘Dad, don’t use the red pen, it just looks like there’s blood all over my paper.’ Families are certainly a place where we can find encouragement from our brothers and our sisters, from our aunts and uncles, from our grandparents, from our spouses. I think we probably have all heard the phrase, ‘Behind every successful man is a wife who believes in him.’ I heard that rephrased one time to say, ‘Behind every successful man is a surprised mother-in-law.’ I don’t know if that’s true. My mother-in-law was a wonderful woman, and I loved her dearly.

“We find encouragement from our teachers. Sometimes we struggle in class. You can tell the teachers that are encouraging. Unfortunately, I have had some teachers that were discouraging. If you didn’t get it, you didn’t get it. It was your fault! You didn’t put in any effort; which is some cases was true, but there were other methods that could be used to help you obtain the knowledge that was contained in those lessons.

“Friends are another source of encouragement that I think is one of the greatest God given sources of encouragement. It is always tougher if you have to go it alone. I think you ought to stand up for what is right even if you are standing alone, but it is a whole lot easier to stand for what is right if there are those who will strengthen you, support you and stand by you. We should be thankful that God put friends along our pathway of life who will encourage us in the work of the Lord.

How Are We Encouragers?

“How are we encouragers? We can affirm the capability that we see in other people. I have insecurities about speaking, but Rob must see that as a possibility for me because he keeps putting me on the schedule. I feel much more qualified to stain and finish the baseboard in the church or do things along those lines; but I accept that there must be more that I can do; so I work to try and share the message that has been given to me.

“The story of Joshua in Deuteronomy is a story of encouragement. It’s about the people coming forty years across the desert with Moses and getting to a point where they’re told that all those of that

generation will not enter into the promised land, nor will Moses. The person selected to lead them from that point on is Joshua. Deuteronomy 1:37-38 says, 'Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shall not go in thither. But Joshua, the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither; encourage him; for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.' That's kind of repeated again in the third chapter, the 28th verse: 'But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.' God was talking to Moses. I would think that would take a lot of encouragement to be the spiritual leader when all the people who were a part of the exodus out of Egypt who have come across the desert are not going into the inherited land, and now you are going to be the person to lead them from here on out! But I believe it's true that with the encouragement and support of each other, we can accomplish much more that we are accomplishing today.

"A second point is that we need to point people to the "opportunities" side of tribulation. We have spent a lot of time looking at the dark side, the problem side of things, the phrase that struck my mind is, 'Every cloud has a silver lining'. We need to get off of the negative and look for the positive, and that should be our point of encouragement. We need to participate in the study and the understanding of the scriptures. I think this past year that has really come to me strongly, especially with the advice from the Elders' Conference that we need to understand the scriptures. If we don't understand the scriptures, we are not going to be in a position to be able to use them if somebody gives us a different interpretation. We're not going to be able to bring others to a knowledge of truth if we don't have that knowledge and understanding ourselves.

"The fourth thing that I thought would be a way to help us to be better encouragers is to tell the stories and to testify about what God is doing in our life. I can't tell you how good it makes me feel when Sam (Agwanda) comes over or we hear from Pam and Eric (Odida) about what's going on in Africa. It's just encouraging to know there are those who are responding and are being baptized and accepting Priesthood calls they are given. And we do that in our prayer and testimony services, but we need to be more diligent in sharing stories and sharing our testimonies of God's goodness to us. In the first chapter of Philippians, 14th verse, Paul is speaking, 'And many of my brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.' Paul was in prison and is saying that because of his tribulation, many more have been made bold to be able to speak. We need to be bold in our testimony of Jesus.

Jesus Speaks Plainly

"Well, the disciples asked Jesus to speak plainly, and He did. He told them that they would face tribulation. He didn't sugar coat it. He didn't say, 'You may'. He said that they would have tribulation. He told them that in Him they would have peace. He told them that He knows this because He was in the world and overcame it. And finally, He said, 'Be of good cheer'. Be encouraged. Look to one another for encouragement. Pray to God for encouragement. Keep your heads up and your hearts focused on the work of the Lord.

"When Steve was teaching the class last Sunday, or maybe the week before, he had some handouts on friendship, and we had a little discussion about one of the verses he had in there. It was Proverbs 27:17. It says, 'As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another'. Remember that, Steve? I think maybe that's what Jesus

was trying to tell us when he said, 'Be of good cheer.' Be encouraging. Help each other that we can all focus on the work of the Lord."

Appropriately we sang, "God sent His Son. They called Him Jesus. He came to love, heal and forgive. He lived and died to buy my pardon. An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives. Because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living just because He lives." We were dismissed with a prayer of thanksgiving, affirming that the victory is ours because our Savior lives.

Thanksgiving For The Promises of God

Obviously moved with emotion, High Priest Sherman Phipps began his sermon by apologizing. "I have a little problem. I pray about these things and ask the Lord to help me and then if I feel His Spirit, I can't talk. I'm sorry I'm this way." Then he read from Doctrine and Covenants 76:1:

"The Lord is God and beside Him there is no Savior; great is his wisdom; marvelous are his ways; and the extent of his doings, none can find out; his purposes fail not; neither are there any who can stay his hand; from eternity to eternity, he is the same, and his years never fail. For thus saith the Lord, I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end; great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory; and to them I will reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old; and for ages to come will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom; yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations; their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven, and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught; for by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will; yea, even those things which ye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man."

God Lives

Brother Phipps expressed his awe at the kinds of things he hears being spoken in the congregation, things he declared he does not know, then adds, "But I'm not complaining, because the one thing I do know this morning is that God lives, and I hope it isn't just being lazy that I don't know some of these other things that so many of you know. But for me, through the years, there have been a lot of those things that I have looked at and thought about for a moment and then thought, 'No. I didn't even want to go there!' And I'm not saying it's wrong for somebody else to know these things. I know that's good, but I just wanted to know God. I just wanted to know what He wanted me to know about Him. I didn't care what anybody else wanted to tell me. That sounds wrong, too, because I'm always interested in what other people have to say about God, but I didn't want to learn about God from man. I wanted to learn about God from God, and He's been pretty good to me. He has allowed me to know some things about Him. I think I have probably shared some of those things with you before, and I don't mean to be repetitious.

"Now, you know we came here this morning - we're approach-

ing the Thanksgiving season, and we have much to be thankful for. I'm not quite sure how to say this. We have much to be concerned about, too. Ron spoke to us a couple of weeks ago, and I wish I could remember exactly how you said it." Sherman addressed Ron Smith.

"But I felt like what you said was by the power of the Spirit. And you were telling us that there were things in our lives that weren't right - if there were things we were doing that were separating us from God, stop it! and that's not as well as he said it, but it was pretty direct like that. And I think this morning, one of the things I would want to say is, 'Stop It now!'

"I made a note in the front of this particular Bible dated February 1986, and I don't know how this will fit with all of you who are scholarly, and all the things that are yet to be done before the scholars will think the day of the Gentiles were finished, but I felt in February of 1986 that the Lord told me that the day of the Gentiles was finished. So, I don't know what that means about where we are today. One of the things I struggle with, and maybe some of you do, too, is when I think at what point in time we are in relationship to the Lord's work and what He's going to do, sometimes I get - frustrated really isn't the word, and depressed really isn't the word; but sometimes I get a little depressed at my own slothfulness, I guess. I get focused on what's coming and all the things the Lord has told us to be prepared for, and it almost becomes more than I can handle, sometimes. I get concerned about the things that are yet to come upon the earth, which will include us.

God's Promise -Elijah's Ministry

"But I don't want to get off on that today, because we are supposed to be dealing with Thanksgiving. And there is a lot to be thankful about. When I start to think of all those things that are yet to come and what that will mean to the people of this earth, and how many will be destroyed and lost, at the same time I think of all the promises that are in the scriptures. And one really came to me strongly a month or so ago as I thought about this group of people that meets here together. You could find this in a lot of different places. I just happened to be reading it this morning from the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 26. (You may want to go read this for yourself so you know the context in which it was given.) One of the things the Lord reminds us of in this section is that He has sent to us or promised us 'Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers, that the whole earth may not be smitten with a curse.' I'll let you decide for yourself what that means to you, but I was really impressed with that one day in terms of this group and how your children respond to you and how you respond to your children, and I don't mean just the little ones. I mean some of the older ones, too, and I know if you are like me, you wish, even now that your children are adults, that they would respond to you a little more sometimes maybe. I wondered if we recognize what a blessing we have because surely the fact that your families are united like they are in many respects bears witness to the fact that God has sent Elijah to work in this congregation. And I wonder how much more He would do for us if we would just ask - if we would just allow him.

Jesus Sends Others To Minister

"When Jesus ministered and appeared to the people on this continent, one of the things He did was He had a conversation with Nephi. He had Nephi bring to Him the records that these people had, and He reviewed them. And there were some things He noticed were left out that He said should be recorded. I think this must be important for us to know if Jesus Himself went through their

scriptures and their records and said, 'You've got some things missing, and I want to be sure that the people in the future know these things.' One of the things that He talked to Nephi about was: 'Verily, I say to you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people that at the day that the Father should glorify His name in me, that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them.'

"Now we have a record, as you know, of the Three Nephites and others who are available to minister to us until the return of Christ upon this earth. And here Christ tells us that Samuel testified that at the time of Jesus' resurrection many saints would arise and minister unto many, but Nephi apparently didn't remember to write that down. Now Christ, Himself was saying, 'It's important that My people know this,' and I think it's important this morning that we know, as we face those things that lie ahead of us, we know that we don't face them alone. We know that Christ is there for us, God is there for us, but He said here, if I am understanding this correctly, 'I have actually sent people to be with you - to walk with you, to counsel with you, to support you.' And I don't know if we really believe that or not. I think we do, but these people who arose, here as well as the Three Nephites and others - John the Beloved - are available to us today. Their ministry is available to us, and we should never feel that we walk alone.

Take Care That Our Words Are Not Stout Against God

"Another thing that Jesus wanted to be sure were included in these records were words from Malachi; and one of these struck me particularly, and I want to read it and see if it strikes you at all. (Third Nephi 1:16) He's quoting from Malachi and He says, 'Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God and what doth it profit that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts? And now we call the proud happy, yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, them that tempt God are even delivered.' Maybe you don't do this, but I know I have been guilty of looking at those around me and thinking . Wow! Their lives seem to be really good! They seem to be doing really well, and they don't seem to think about God at all! They don't acknowledge God, and yet things seem to go well for them. Hopefully, none of the rest of you have ever been guilty of that, but I have, and it really caught my attention when He said, 'Your words have been stout against me.' when you have done that. I would not want to be guilty of that today, and I would hope none of us would be guilty of that. I would hope that we would not waver in our faith or in our desire to serve God - that no matter how things appear to us, that we might always recognize God's presence with us.

"As I stand here this morning, I don't know what it is, and maybe I should know, and maybe I would know if I were a little more sensitive to the Spirit, I don't know what it is that you folks struggle with day to day. I could stand here and tell you some of the things I struggle with, and you might be able to identify some of those things in your lives too; but the one thing I know as I stand here this morning with absolute assurance, is that God knows what you struggle with. He knows the things that frustrate you. He knows the things that cause you to be sorrowful and to mourn. He knows the needs that you have. He knows how you perhaps sometimes are very critical of yourselves and feel unworthy, but He has promised us - each one of us - that if we will recognize Him as our God - if we will humble ourselves and repent not just once - every time we

are willing to humble ourselves and repent, he will be our God. I feel inadequate to say much more about that this morning because probably all of you have as good or better vision of God than I do; but I am amazed when I think about our God and how He created all the earth and everything that is in it.

"I'm like Rob's prayer this morning. I'm amazed when I just think about how my eye works. Who could have done that? Who could have created an eye from nothing? I won't try to get into that. You have probably thought that through better than I have.

"I wanted to read a couple of other scriptures to you this morning. I don't know if they will strike you as they did me or not, but in terms of being thankful and grateful, to me there is no way that I can thank the Lord for what He does for me every day. As I indicated earlier, there are times when I get really frustrated, and I will share one of these with you.

"I got to thinking about this the other day, and I thought, 'What is it about me' - and I know you are really not supposed to focus on yourself, but I said, 'What is it about me that the people I really care about and the people I love don't seem to be much interested in God?' Now that's not always true. You people are, and I care about you and I love you too, and I think about you a lot. But I thought about my family members. None of them seem to be real interested in God, in the Restoration, or in the Book of Mormon. I thought about family members with many, many gifts who I feel are distracted by the world, and I could go on like that, but I probably shouldn't - probably shouldn't have even mentioned those. I thought, 'Why is it that I can't reach them?' Those are the kinds of things I think about that frustrate me. Perhaps you do that, too. Perhaps you know, I struggle - I won't mention names -- but all the time there are people around us that need things, and we see those people who need healings, who need to be encouraged, and I'm thinking what is it that I am not able, by the power of God, to just reach out and meet those needs? I get frustrated and discouraged when I think of those things.

God Knows Your Needs; His Promises Are Sure

"Today, on the other hand, we have these words (Psalms 3:1): 'Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice; and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awakened; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise; O Lord; save me, O my God; for thou hast smitten all my enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; thy blessing is upon thy people.' How could you ask for anything better than that? No matter what we struggle with - no matter what we deal with, no matter the burdens we carry for others as well as ourselves, there is never a time when the Lord is not there for us, and He tells us that over and over again in so many different ways!

"I don't know what it would take for you, I have been struggling with what it would take for me, to recognize that and to look to the Lord every day and to remember His promises - to know that no matter what lies ahead - no matter what I see happening around me, that the Lord is my Lord, and He's your Lord. He stands with power to do all things, and He will do everything that He has promised us.

I was going to read some others there, but I don't want to just keep you sitting while I read. I had a lot of scriptures picked out

today, and I wasn't sure how many of those to use; but I wanted somehow to relay to you and encourage you and to have you think about all the promises that the Lord has made us. But especially I wanted you to know today that the Lord is very keenly aware of all of your needs. He knows the things you struggle with. He knows the things that discourage you, but He created each one of you from before the foundation of the earth. You are His creation. It's amazing to me. I look out here at you people thinking, 'Every one of these people God created in the very beginning.' And He gave each one of you the particular qualities which we have. He gave us the weaknesses that we have that we might be humble and remember our need for Him. None of us should feel like we have to give up ever. I don't know if this makes any sense to you, but I struggle with thinking, 'Well, I am just so weak, and I know so little compared to everybody else or whatever. A lot of times I think there just can't be anything I could do that would be worth while because there is always somebody else out there that it looks to me would be better able to do it. But that's not true. He created you for a purpose. He sent you. I don't know about the rest of you, but I think sometimes maybe He even gave us an option as to when we came - as to time. That may or may not be true, but I have felt that in my life sometimes that He allowed me to take a pick when I would come. Then sometimes I want to turn around and complain about it. It doesn't make much sense, does it?

"I don't know that I have anything else to say this morning except that I want you to understand the best that I can say it, that the Lord knows you. You are His. He created you for a purpose. He stands ready to make sure that that purpose is accomplished because we of ourselves are nothing on the one end, and yet on the other end, all of His promises are there for us. All of His angels and servants are there for us to support us and uplift us and guide us. So today, as we think about Thanksgiving, you are probably thinking, 'I don't see how any of that had anything to do with Thanksgiving'; but when we think about Thanksgiving, and maybe this is easy for me to say and hard for each of us to do, but let's not focus on the problems, the struggles, the difficulties, the things that keep us back, sometimes. But let's focus, if we can, on how grateful we should be that the Lord even allows us to exist - that He allows us to be instruments in His hands in spite of our weaknesses. And surely we would rejoice in recognizing His promises to us and how sure those promises are - how powerful He is - how great He is, and yet He stands ready to assist us. At least in my case, I can say, 'He stands ready to assist me who is nothing'! I know I am nothing, and yet, there He is with His arms wide open. And I know that's true for each of us.

"I hope something that has been said or read today will encourage you to try and think about what it is that the Lord created you for and sent you to this time for; and that you will be reassured that everything He has promised is going to happen; and that no matter what comes upon this world, if you will be humble and look to the Lord, He will preserve you whether it be in this life or in the life to come. We have no reason - no need to fear anything that lies ahead except maybe, our failure to repent."

Norman Nelson, who was in charge of the service, spoke saying forcefully, "The message you received is true!"

Congregation Worships With Music and Praise

Praise and thanksgiving were the theme of the congregation's music service of November 23. Following the prelude, played by Kathy Akers at the piano, our first hymn, accompanied by Kathy was;

"Praise to the Lord, the almighty, the king of creation!
O my soul praise Him, for he is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, Now to His temple draw near.
Praise Him in glad adoration."

Gordon Winkler read Psalm 100: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord, he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting and his truth endureth to all generations."

Brother Robert Rolfe, who was in charge of the service, accompanied us on his guitar as he taught us a new song that he had printed in the bulletin.

"I will rejoice and praise the name of Jesus.
To praise him brings joy to my soul. (Repeat refrain.)
I will rejoice because his blood has purchased my salvation,
I will rejoice because His Spirit lives in me;
I will rejoice because my name is written down in heaven,
I'll rejoice because I'll live with Him through all eternity.

After the singing, he talked briefly about our need to praise our God always, and the many ways to praise our Lord that would be revealed in this service.

Diane Anderson read 2 Nephi 3:50 - "Rejoice, O my heart and cry unto the Lord and say, O Lord, I will praise Thee forever. Yea, my soul will rejoice in Thee, O my God and the rock of my salvation.

Matthew Anderson followed playing a Christmas hymn on the piano.

Tyler Morris read from Ether 3:11: "And they did sing praises unto the Lord; yea, the Brother of Jared did sing praises unto the Lord, and he did thank and praise the Lord all the day long; and when the night came, they did not cease to praise the Lord."

The Galusha family provided three musical offerings. Cessaries and Jazmyn played a piano duet, Aquila played "The Music Box", and Cessaries, currently a student at the University of Missouri Conservatory of music, chose two piano solos from her extensive music repertoire. She played "Etude #13 (Harp)" by Chopin and "A Barcoller" by Ned Roren.

Brandi Anderson read Psalm 112:1-3: "Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house; and his righteousness endureth forever."

We were privileged to have a number of members of the Jordison family in attendance at the service. Jan was at the piano for all their offerings. Rachel Killpack and her daughter Jennie sang of

our redemption by the blood of the Lamb. "Through His infinite mercy His child, and forever I am."

Diane Goecke joined Rachel to sing the awe inspiring promise of the Lord found in 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Heidi Winkler read Psalm 113:1-3: "Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forever more. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised."

Barbra Jordison joined her sisters, Diane and Rachel, to sing, "May blessings be upon you, precious people. May favor rest upon your family. May your future be a holy legacy. May Blessings be upon you, precious people."

Matthew Anderson and Aquila Galusha received the offerings of the people after a prayer of thanksgiving offered by Brother Rolfe.

Ron and Di Smith took their place before the microphone and as Ron played the guitar, Di read, "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Isaiah 7:14 - Interpretation from Bible Concordance). They then sang a medley of two songs praising Him, "Emmanuel! Emmanuel! His name is called Emmanuel. God with us, Redeeming us. His name is called Emmanuel," and "Come Thou long expected Jesus. Born to set thy people free," ending with "Emmanuel, Emmanuel. His name is called Emmanuel!"

Linda Winkler read, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received and heard, and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you." (Phillipians 4:8-9.)

With a new song, Steven Smith, accompanying himself on his guitar, urged us each to spread around the kindness, mercy, goodness, righteousness, and joy that are deep in our souls if we "want it back another day. 'Cause if you hold it tight and don't let it go, smother it with pride, no one will know; 'cause if you hold it back and don't let it show, it simply fades away."

A prayer, offered by our Pastor, gave thanks for the gifts shared and acknowledged that it is because of the blessings God has given that each one has been able to reach within themselves and draw out their gift; and the expression of those gifts has blessed us all.

The Spirit of God pervaded the entire congregation as we sang "Redeemer of Israel" with joy and thanksgiving. We were dismissed with the pronouncement, "God bless you!" and the postlude: "The Voice of God is Calling. Its summons unto men; As once He spoke in Zion, So now He speaks again! Whom shall I send to succor My people in their need? Whom shall I send to loosen The bonds of lust and greed?"

"We heed, O Lord, thy summons, and answer, 'Here are we!' Send us upon thine errand; Let us thy servants be. Our strength is dust and ashes, Our years a passing hour- But thou canst use our weakness To magnify thy power.

News & Notes

University Student Graduates

Brock Bastow will be graduated from Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, MO. December 12 with a major in Management Information Systems and minors in multimedia and Spanish.

Student Competes for Scholarship

Brandy Anderson has entered Guideposts' Young Writer's competition with the story of her family becoming members of the Mount Ayr congregation and the healing of her twisted foot. Scholarships awarded range from \$10,000 for the top winner to \$250 for honorable mentions.

Many of us remember the little girl who came of our 1995 Nauvoo retreat with a foot twisted so that she could not keep up with her playmates who, healed under the hands of the Elders, was running with the best of them the next day. Brandy, that little girl, now competes successfully in many sports, including track.

Beloved Patriarch Dies

Patriarch Roy Kopp fell at his home in Lamoni's Crown Colony. Hospitalized, he fell again at the Leon hospital. The second fall resulted in a severe hip fracture that the doctors judged irreparable. The 95 year old beloved minister passed away November 17. His funeral service was conducted by Elders Ed Collyer and Robert Rolfe

Matriarch of the Congregation In Decline

Helen Bastow, one of the earliest surviving members of the Mount Ayr congregation is in declining health at the Mount Ayr Health Center next to the church. Visits are requested.

Church Chosen for Christmas

Tour of Homes

Each year one church is chosen in Mount Ayr to be visited on

the Christmas tour of homes. The Mount Ayr Restoration's church home will be visited on Saturday, December 6. It is planned to offer all visitors live Christmas music provided by various members of the congregation and by guest artists Julie and Nathan Smith. Julie will be playing the violin and Nathan will play piano solos and accompany his wife at the piano.

Nathan will be coming from his final student recital, performed December 5, that qualifies him to be graduated by the University of Missouri Conservatory of Music on December 19. He will be awarded the degree of Doctor of Music in Piano Performance.

Youth State Champion in Marshal Arts

Aquila Galusha won both of his meets at the annual Iowa State Judo Championship Conference at Sioux City recently. He won first place in his age and weight division.

Women's Class Postponed

Because of the many activities surrounding the celebration of Christmas, the next meeting of the women's class in the Lamoni Homestead will be January 5, 2004.

Prayers Answered

Prayers offered by the congregation for Gordon Winkler's father were answered. His heart surgery, which his doctors suggested could easily be fatal because of his debilitated condition, was later described as "routine". The prediction now is that he will have a 50% increase in heart function over that preceding the surgery.

Special holiday activities

Two special holiday activities are planned in the Mount Ayr congregation. A caroling party will be held Sunday, Dec. 21, at 5:30 p.m., meeting at the church in Mount Ayr

A New Year's Eve party will be held at the Gordon Winkler home in Mount Ayr Wednesday, Dec. 31.