

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

We Come to Thank Him Again

Barbra Jordison sang, before the emblems were served, "Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb! Redeemed thro' His infinite mercy; His child, and forever, I am. Redeemed and so happy in Jesus, no language my rapture can tell! I know that the light of His presence with me doth continually dwell. I know I shall see in His beauty the King, in whose law I delight, Who lovingly guardeth my footsteps and giveth me songs in the night."

Priest Kent Clisby spoke after the emblems had been served and addressed his first comments to that experience. "What a wonderful Day! A blessing on the wine. A blessing on the bread. A blessing on ourselves." Brother Clisby had in front of him his two sons who have not had the privilege of sharing much of their lives with him, and he took the opportunity both to thank them for being there and to serve them their Communion, explaining that James is leaving here in a few days to go to California, then to boot camp, back to Georgia. "I asked for the privilege of serving my sons this morning," he said. "I don't know if I will ever get the opportunity again, so take it when you can!"

Explaining that there are some things that have to precede our partaking of the emblems of Christ's sacrifice, Brother Clisby read from Doctrine and Covenants 17:18a-18c. "The duty of the members after they are received by baptism". They are to be taught so they understand what membership in the church means. They are to manifest a "godly walk and conversation", "walking in holiness before the Lord", "that there may be works and faith agreeable to the Holy Scriptures".

To be baptized, a person must have "arrived unto the years of accountability before God," and be "capable of repentance." (Children of Saints who have not reached the age of accountability, are to be blessed by the laying on of hands of the Elders in the name of Jesus Christ.) Baptism must be in the prescribed manner, by immersion with "The person who is called of God and has authority from Jesus Christ to baptize, shall go down into the water with the person who has presented him or herself for baptism, and shall say, calling him or her by name: "Having been commissioned of Jesus

Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen."

Brother Clisby observed that he had had only three opportunities to baptize others, and in every case it was necessary for him to hesitate before pronouncing the prayer in order to regain control of his emotions - "to slow things down while I wait for myself to come back up." He expressed appreciation that those observing understand it is very exciting for him. "When you are immersing others, it is just like you are doing it to yourself again."

Other Steps to the Communion Table

Coming to the table of the altar requires that one does more than be baptized in water. After you are baptized by water, you are baptized by the Holy Spirit. Section 34:2c reads, "Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost; but now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old." Be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost.

Repent. "It seems like I have to do that almost every day. I wish I followed along the way we are supposed to be all of the time. I keep asking myself, "How come I don't talk to my sons in a little better manner?" I ask for forgiveness from them. I ask for them to be more than I see of other people sometimes. I think of them as being able to do more, but I don't know if I have really encouraged them a whole lot."

Brother Clisby shared a most appropriate story he had received by e-mail. (We would like to print it all, but must tell it briefly to conserve space.)

A minister noticed a man, unshaven, dressed in a worn, shabby coat and carrying a lunch pail come into his church each noon, kneel at the altar, pray briefly and walk away. The minister became suspicious. Afraid the man intended to rob him, he stopped him and asked what he was doing there.

The man said, he worked down the road. Lunch was half an hour that he used to "pray for strength and power". He could only stay a moment because the factory was so far away. Each time he said he prayed:

"I just came again to tell you, Lord, how happy I have been Since we found each other's friendship, and you took away my sin. I don't know much of how to pray, but I think about You every day. So, Jesus, this is Jim checking in today."

The minister, feeling foolish, told the man he was welcome to come any time. As he left, for the first time, the minister, His cold heart melted and warmed with love, knelt at the altar and met with Jesus there. As tears flowed in his heart, he repeated Jim's prayer. Then there were days that Jim did not come to pray. Worried, the

minister went to factory to inquire and learned that he was in the hospital. There the staff was worried, but Jim's smiles and contagious joy had changed the ward. The head nurse couldn't understand why Jim was always glad when he had received no visitor, no flowers, no calls, no cards. When the minister voiced the head nurse's concern, Jim smiled and protested:

"The nurse is wrong! She couldn't know that all the while. Every day at noon, He's here. A dear friend of mine, you see. He sits right down, takes my hand, leans over and says to me: "I just came to tell you, Jim, how happy I have been Since we found this friendship and I took away your sin. Always love to hear you pray. I think about you every day. So, Jim, this is Jesus, checking in today."

"Many people will walk in and out of our lives, But only true friends will leave footprints in our hearts. May God hold you in the palm of His hand and angels watch over you,

"But for those of us who are already His, He not only holds us in the palm of His hand but has engraved our names there, and we are constantly in His sight. (Isaiah 49:16)"

We have no fear because He is always here. We have allowed Jesus to take upon Him our sins, and we have come to thank Him again. May the blessings of this service be with you.

Afterglow

closing the service, High Priest Sherman Phipps read Psalm 27:4-7 and Psalm 28:6-8, affirming that one thing we will do is to seek after the Lord continually so He can do for us the desires of His heart. "The Lord is my strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed." He then stated, "My prayer, as we close this service today would be that the Lord might continue to seek after each one of us that He might continue to claim us as His own and to give us the strength and wisdom to fulfill the covenants that we have made with Him and that you might, each one of you each day, be as part of His anointed."

After the congregation sang, "This is our Story. This is our Song. Praising our Savior all the day long!", High Priest Robert Rolfe offered this prayer: "Our Father, when Your son was on earth, He taught us the story about a son, who, when he came to himself realized the life he had versus the life he could have with his father. Father, we need to arrive at that moment in our life more than just once. We need to take a look at our circumstances and realize that it is only companionship with You that can create the thing that we are looking for - that joy and hope, that happiness and freedom that comes through the gospel of Your Son, Jesus Christ. May You bless us this day in our families and our friendships and prepare our hearts to anticipate Your goodness here as we come to the Reunion next week. Amen."

The congregation responded singing, "My Jesus, I love You. I know Thou art mine. For Thee all the folly of sin I resign. My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou. If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now! Amen."

Weekend of Fasting and Prayer Closes With Prayer Service

Because of the nature of the service, there was no bulletin for June 11, 2006. Michael Jordison was in charge. The Service was opened with the singing of "Oh, worship the King, all glorious above. Oh, gratefully sing His power and His love." ... , and the reading of Psalm 145.

Brother Jordison prayed a prayer of praise and adoration then announced that the request for prayers would be divided into four groups: 1. prayers of diligence and obedience; 2. prayers that we be filled with love; 3. Prayers asking for humility; 4. prayers for healing and restoration. Pastor Alan Smith was asked to offer a prayer of repentance for the congregation before we entered into the first prayer session.

Prayers for Diligence and Obedience

Following the prayer of repentance Michael introduced the first session by asking Brandi Anderson to read 1 Nephi 1:65: Nephi's statement that he will do whatever the Lord asks because he knows If God asks He will prepare a way to accomplish it.

Michael read Micah 6:6-8: Micah's understanding that the Lord requires no blood sacrifices of us - only that for us "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Commenting on the meaning of 'walking justly', Brother Jordison suggested that if we reverse the words, we get "justly do" and he equated those words with the instruction to get busy and do those things that are right - things that are just, pure, true. God is asking that we trust Him and obey His commandments. As Solomon said, Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

Jesus told His disciples in Luke 17:10, that when they do what He commands, they were only doing their duty as His servants. More recently that same call was made to the early Latter Day Saint in Doctrine and Covenants 10:3a, 3c, 9a, 10a. Our duty is to "justly do" all that God has asked, trusting that God will prepare the way for us to accomplish it, Michael declared.

The hymn, "God is my strong Salvation" was sung and prayers were offered from the congregation. Jordan Thomas played a short piano piece and Alan Smith read John 17:24-26: a portion of the prayer Jesus Christ offered for us, His followers,

Prayers for Love Filled Lives

Brother Jordison followed reading John 3:16-17, commenting that Jesus prayed that the love the Father had for Him might be in us. That love caused the Father give the most precious thing He had, His only Beloved Son, that the world might be saved - that the world might know God and live forever with Him. We were challenged to be willing to give up our most precious possessions to bring the world to Christ that they might be saved? We were reminded of the campfire song that declares, "Love, love, love, love. The gospel in one word is love. Love your neighbor as thy brother. Love, love, love!" The congregation confirmed the sentiment singing the hymn, "The love of God is wide like beach and meadow, Wide as the wind and an eternal home."

A quintette, comprised of the five Lade children, sang, "Tis a glorious thing to be in the light."

Prayers from the congregation asking that we be filled with love were followed by Cara Smith reading Mosiah 2:13-21 King Benjamin's axioms for living. They instruct us in what we should believe and urge us to do the things in which we believe. We are to "humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come+."

Prayers for Humility

The scripture goes on to say, Mosiah 2:22, if you do this you will "always retain a remission of your sins." Elder Jordison asked us to consider what it means to come into the "depths of humility". To humble yourself is to not think highly of yourself but to

recognize that all you have is the Lord's. But the depths of humility indicates that you are more lowly still, are willing to undergo all that the Lord has for us - the good and the bad. Mosiah 1:119-120 reads: "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been, from the fall of Adam, and will be, for ever and ever; But if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father."

Being in the depths of humility is more than recognizing your lowly state. It is recognizing that we are all God's children in this world. None is more precious than another. We allow ourselves to be the tools of the Lord to bring others to Jesus Christ, trusting that His righteous purposes will be wrought out in not only our lives but in the lives of His other children through our witness.

We sang, "Touch me, Lord, with Your Spirit eternal", a plea for God, by His Spirit to take our lives and use them for His purposes. There were prayers that we be willing to come down into the depths of humility that the Kingdom of God might rule. The Lade quintette sang, "The Saints shall wear robes as the lilies."

Prayers for Healing and Restoration

The final group of prayers was for healing and restoration. Rodney Bastow read Revelation 21:3-5, reminding us that it is God's intent to make all things new - where there will be no more pain or suffering, no more sorrow or tears.

Brother Jordison spoke first of the woman who believed that if she just touched the hem of Jesus' garment, she could be healed from her sickness, and she was healed. Then he spoke of the Prodigal son who spent his inheritance on riotous living and was accepted back by his father as a son. He cited Alma's prophecy of the birth of Jesus who, because He came to live as man knows how "to succor his people according to their infirmities. ... the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh, that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions, according to the power of his deliverance;" We were invited to recognize the spirit of that statement. Jesus is going through our struggles with us. He wants to bear our burdens for us. And if we press on with faith through whatever our circumstances, He promises that the day is coming when He shall make all things new. Knowing that day is coming, may we be willing to endure and call it all joy?

There were prayers for healing, both individual ills and Christ's church. Aquila Galusha accompanied the receiving of the offering* on his guitar.

The Conclusion of the Service

The congregation sang five stanzas of "Admonition", the Spirit's message through Apostle Joseph Luff that urged, "O My people, saith the Spirit. Hear the word of God today; ... Be not slothful but obedient. 'Tis the world's momentous day!" The benediction was pronounced by our presider.

*There was a box provided for contributions to the fund for Isaac Akers, and that portion of the regular offering not otherwise designated was also contributed to that cause.

If You Want to Be in The Kingdom of God

The scripture reading chosen by Elder Norman Nelson was

Zechariah 4:6, "Then he answered and spake unto me saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zarubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The congregation sang the Lord's Prayer and Brother Nelson commented, "That probably is my favorite song. In fact, my wife and I, the last several months, have taken to using that as our "wake up" song in the morning and again when we are going to bed."

We know that God knows and recognizes all of our weaknesses, all of our goods and all our bads. It behooves us to do the same and to keep asking Him to bless our efforts.

Today we are working on the Kingdom of God at our Reunion. As I began considering this, I began to wonder if any of us would really know what it is like to have a King. A king, as we think of it, an earthly king, is someone who demands all of our loyalty. If he desires, he can take anything we have. We who live in liberty think that is not what we want. But the Kingdom of God is where we have a perfect king. And part of what He demands of us is that we love each other as well as loving Him. You don't find someone making a mistake and push him into the mud. You do what you can to pick him up. You show forgiveness and love that allows him to forgive himself and come back into the presence of the Lord.

As I have tried to find things that would be of benefit for us, I remembered that not only the New Testament but the Old Testament as well, has many things important to us. Malachi said, (Malachi 4:5-6) "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

I was interested in a story of a man that we don't consider very religious. How many of you have heard of Lake Woebegone stories? The other day he came out on the radio and said, "Christ is coming soon, and it just ain't gonna be like it was the last time. He's going to come as a judge, a mighty ruler, and those who haven't tried to make their lives of value to others are going to find themselves in deep, deep trouble."

We always think of God as a God of kindness, love and so forth, and so He is! But He has a back hand, too, and if you aren't trying to be that kind of person, you get all the woes that happen to people who don't want to love each other. People who want to be rulers on their own, don't want to accept Christ as our King. They are going to be in deep trouble. Now is that me, sometimes?

What is the cure for all of this? I have to recognize who I am, that I am a sinner, that I need to repent and do what I can to come back to being the kind of person that can love and be loved, try to be a servant, not a ruler, to give to Christ the glory and the honor and the good things that He deserves. Remember who you and I are. And He spent His life trying to show us how. Then He went to the cross to take our sins upon Himself.

I am sure I have told you folks this experience before, but one evening when I was in Nigeria talking to a group of men who called themselves Evangelists, question time came and one of them asked me, "Why did Christ sin in the Garden of Gethsemane?" That was quite a shocker. I said, "Well, He didn't!". I didn't know anything else to say. And at that moment He (Christ) said to me, "You think I was afraid to die on the cross, and you are wrong! The reason I sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane was because I knew the pain of having to be separated from My Father in order to take upon Me your sins, if you repent!"

Repentance is the one thing that we don't seem to do very well.

We want to just go ahead and do our thing thinking, "It wasn't important. I made a mistake, but - etc." But the one thing we are required to do and we don't do well in this church is, repent of your sins. Confess your sins to your brothers and to each other and before the Lord. Repentance is one of the number one things that we have to do if we are to be the people that we are supposed to be.

And we are supposed to not condemn each other. We are to pick each other up, recognizing our weaknesses, our faults and our sins and still coming back to being the people that love each other - that serve the Lord the best we can with what we have to work with.

From Micah the sixth chapter, verses 6-8: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Pride of self is one of the major enemies of our souls. Genesis 2:1-9

"Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day, I, God, ended my work, and all things which I had made; and I rested on the seventh day from all my work; and all things which I had made were finished. And I, God, saw that they were good. And I, God, blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it I had rested from all my work, which I, God, had created and made.

"And now, behold, I say unto you, that these are the generations of the heaven, and of the earth, when they were created in the day that I the Lord God made the heaven and the earth, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew; For I, the Lord God, created all things of which I have spoken spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth; for I, the Lord God, had not caused it to rain upon the face of the earth.

"And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men, and not yet a man to till the ground, for in heaven created I them, and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air;

"But I, the Lord God, spake, and there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And I, the Lord God, formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul; the first flesh upon the earth, the first man also; Nevertheless, all things were before created, but spiritually were they created and made, according to my word."

Our existence is not limited to our few days here. But we are in a probationary state, seeing if we will listen to what the Lord has asked us to do or if we will try to go our own way - to try to gain properties and things that are of no value. We are spiritual creatures! We are people of spirit! And after our few days here, we go back to the spiritual world. And if we have chosen to live in a proper manner, we can go back and serve with our God as His children, as His family, as a group of people of spiritual nature who love each other and are servants unto our God. That way, we become part of all eternity with our Father and thereby He becomes our King, and our Lord and all of those wonderful things we think of Him as being. But if we refuse to listen and follow the example He has given us, then we can never achieve those things that allow us to be in His

presence.

What do you think would happen if God gave us all of His powers in our present state of being? Which way would we send the earth? Where would the stars go? What would happen? It is important that we learn to obey and be a loving, kindly people, not exalting ourselves but praising our Lord and being content to live with Him and for Him. Otherwise, there is nothing but chaos. Our universe could not exist in that situation. We must, if we want to be part of a Kingdom of God, learn to repent, change, and when we make a mistake, ask forgiveness. Seek always the kindness and the love of our God.

The kind of things that Jesus talked about are in Chapter five of Matthew. I think you all know these really well. Matthew 5:2--4: "And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are they who shall believe on me; and again, more blessed are they who shall believe on your words, when ye shall testify that ye have seen me and that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe on your words, and come down into the depth of humility, and be baptized in my name; for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins."

How much do you value the presence of the Holy Ghost in your life? It's there for you if you have been baptized and received it. But you can turn it off real easy if you refuse to repent and seek diligently to have it with you. If you don't seek the Holy Ghost, it doesn't bother you. And if you don't have the Holy Ghost, you can't repent. You can't do the things that are necessary for life itself in the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 5:5-"Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit, who come unto me; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

You can't be proud and claim everything for yourself. You must be repentant and loving of all.

Mat. 5:6-13: "And again, blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. And blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

"And blessed are all they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. And blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. And blessed are all the pure in heart; for they shall see God. And blessed are all the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.

"Blessed are all they that are persecuted for my name's sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." ("For my sake". Not if you are really that way. Not if you are really an evil person. That is not there! But if you are doing it for My (Christ's) sake - for the sake of the Lord, then you are blessed.) "For ye shall have great joy, and be exceeding glad; for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Matt 5:15 "I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor, wherewith shall the earth be salted? the salt shall thenceforth be good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

In my thinking, the Kingdom of Zion, the ability to love each other - these are dreams that we hope will be true. We must, though, as I said, be humble and full of love.

In recent time, I think some of the best advice that is most helpful to us is in the words the Patriarchs have said, : repent, choose each day to study the word of God and spend much time in prayer and supplication. Unless we do these things - study, pray, repent and return to the Lord, Zion will be. God's Kingdom will be. If we

want to be part of it, we have got to be the pure in heart - the ones that love, and love each other and be servants to each other.

God's Holy Spirit Change Things

Seventy Ronald Smith accompanied the congregation on his guitar as we sang, "Santo, Santo, Santo - Holy, Holy, Holy" and Elder Alan Smith offered the invocation. We sang, "Allelu, Allelu, Allelu, Allelujah", and Ronald spoke concerning the baptism of the Holy Ghost which Tegan and Tanner Rowland were about to experience.

In Acts the eighth chapter there is a really neat story about Simon the sorcerer. I don't know if you have ever heard of Simon the Sorcerer before, but he was a magician. That's what a sorcerer is. He was in Samaria, a town close to where Jesus lived. He was a pretty powerful man. According to the eighth chapter of Acts, he would do magic tricks, and people thought he had the power of God. So they followed him. They did what he said because he was a great magician.

There was a man named Philip who came down to Samaria, and Philip had been converted to Jesus Christ. He was a pretty powerful minister. He would do miracles in the name of Jesus, and the scriptures say that when Philip spoke, the people, with one accord would give heed to those things he said, "hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. Because unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies and that were lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city." You can imagine, if the people who were sick were being healed, you would have great joy, too.

When Simon saw what Philip was doing, he said, "I would like that!" And he believed also. He believed what Philip said about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and he was baptized as well; and he marveled at the marvelous things that Philip did. When the Apostles heard that Philip had baptized these people in Samaria, Peter and John came down to Samaria and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, because, as yet the Holy Ghost had not fallen on any of them. They had only been baptized in the name of Jesus. And when they laid their hands on the people's heads, like you are going to have hands laid on your head today, they received the Holy Ghost. Simon saw that it wasn't just Philip who could do these marvelous things in the name of Jesus, but when the people who had just been baptized received the Holy Ghost, they could do those things, too.

Simon was envious! He said, "I have lots of money. I will give you money, and you can give me that power so that when I lay my hands on people's heads, they can have the gift of the Holy Ghost, too." But Peter said. "Thy money perish with thee! You don't understand the gift of God."

You see, what is going to happen to you today can't be bought. It's worth more than any amount of money in the world. And nobody can get this by making lots of money and giving it to somebody. It just doesn't happen that way, because what you have today is a gift.

Have you ever had a good gift? What's the best gift you can remember? Can you think of one? But you know you have had one. Right? You remember that at Christmas time you got a good gift. Well, I got a good gift once. I have had several good gifts, but one

of the gifts that I got was a guitar. My parents gave me a guitar. I learned to play that guitar, and because I learned to play it, I have been able to bring ministry all over the world playing my guitar. And that was a good gift because I used the gift, developed it, and now I can play the guitar and sing.

My parents also gave me a trombone. The gift was good, but I stopped playing the trombone after the sixth grade. If I picked up the trombone now, I would not be very good at playing it. That's because I didn't use the gift. It wasn't because the gift was not given. It was because I did not use it.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is kind of like that. If you will allow it to, if you will use the gift, there are all kinds of things that you are going to be able to do. The gift of the Holy Ghost can help you tell truth from falsehood. The scripture says the gift will lead you into all truth. So, if you are trying to make a decision and you don't know whether what somebody says is true or what somebody else says is true, you can ask the Holy Ghost, and He will help you find what is true. He will lead you into all truth.

The gift of the Holy Ghost will help you do the things that Jesus did. And actually, Jesus said, you could do greater things than He did. Would you like to do something greater than what Jesus did? Would you? I mean, Jesus healed a lot of people. He did a lot of miracles; but He said that you could do something greater than what He did. And the thing that you can do that is greater than what He did is build the Kingdom. That's what the gift of the Holy Ghost is for. It is to help us so we can be part of that Kingdom.

Sometimes when you first hear or first know about the gift of the Holy Ghost you have a really interesting experience. I was talking to three young men in Nepal. Do you know where Nepal is over by China? I don't know if you met the man, Ram Baral, who was from Nepal at the Reunion. He shared testimonies several times. It was kind of hard to understand him because of his accent but he is a pretty good missionary. When I was in his country in Nepal, there were three young men who came who were what they call "untouchables". Untouchables are people that, in the caste system that they have there, are the poor. You can't talk with them. You can't have them in your home. You can't touch them. They are really cast out. They were coming to Katmandu where we were to find work, and they had never heard of Jesus Christ. They had never heard of God. They had never heard of the Hindu gods. Nobody had ever told them because they were untouchable. They didn't know anything about God. They were born. They grew up. They worked, and they died! That was it! And do you know what they said about what happened when they heard about Jesus? They said, "Our spirits leapt up within us!"

I think it is kind of like this. This is a bottle of Coke. When you make Coke, it is kind of fizzy at first. After awhile it goes kind of flat and you don't get much fizz out of it. Sometimes our lives are kind of like that. (Ron started to open the bottle of Coke and at that juncture Alan Smith and Sherman Phipps began to move away from their position behind Ron in front of the audience.) The idea of the gift of the Holy Ghost is that when you get the hands laid on your head, something is going to happen. The Holy Ghost is going to come into your life.

(Ron opened a small bag of candies saying, "These are breath mints. Don't try this at home!" He positioned the open Coke bottle with its mouth headed away from the congregation and announced, "I am going to put some breath mints into the Coke." We heard him ask, "Should I hold it?" Someone said, "Don't hold it!" Immediately there was the sound of a small explosion as foamy bubbles

plumed into the air and cascaded to the ground in a spectacular tan colored arch.” There was general laughter and Ron came back to the microphone asking, “Did you see that? I hope so! It kind of explodes! It was fun!”

So what you can expect from the gift of the Holy Ghost is something that will be with you for a lifetime. It can make a change in your life, just like those breath mints made a change in that Coke. It will help you to keep the covenant that you made in the waters of baptism so you can be the people that Jesus wants. You can be more like Him. May God bless you always, and I hope you will remember this day and the gift of the Holy Ghost that is within you.

Brother Smith picked up his guitar and led the congregation singing, “Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me! Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me!” Teagin was the first to receive her confirmation. Sherman Phipps, the children’s grandfather, was spokesman for each blessing that followed.

“Teagin, as we lay our hands upon your head this day, we do so with a clear understanding that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which you, like each one of us, need and which has been promised by our Heavenly Father can come only from Him. We are only instruments in His hands. And we pray, Teagin, that the true and living God who has created each one of us would work with you now - that He would dwell in your heart all the days of your life, and that He would, indeed, even now in this moment, pour out His Holy Spirit upon you. May His Holy Spirit teach you everything you need to know in your life. May it prompt you and keep you to walk in His paths that you may, when the time comes, rejoice with the Church of the Firstborn.

Teagin, I pray, too, that the Holy Spirit would continue to work with you so that your heart would be softened so that it would be turned unto the Lord always that He would be free to work in your life as He desires to do.

And, Father, in as much as Teagin has expressed a belief in you - she has chosen to repent and go down into the waters of baptism - we claim your promise, then, that she might be forgiven and cleansed and that she might, indeed be baptized by Your Holy Spirit - that it might lead her throughout her life and return her back into Your presence with rejoicing. And we pray it in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Tanner took his place and the prayer for his baptism follows:

“Tanner, we rejoice this day that you, too, have been sensitive to the prompting of the Spirit - that you have chosen to go down into the waters of baptism and to make a promise unto your God that you will look to Him always - that you will do the best that you can do to give your life unto Him. And Tanner, in as much as you are sincere in this promise, and we are grateful for the sincerity of your young heart, and in as much as you are sincere, then I ask in this moment that our Heavenly Father would fulfill His promise unto you and pour out His Holy Spirit upon you, and that you might feel the urging of this Holy Spirit all the days of your life prompting you to do that which is right, teaching you that which is right, directing you in His path not only for your sake but for the sake of your fellowmen.

And, Tanner, in as much as you respond to this Holy Spirit, then the Lord has promised that you will be a member of His church - a member of the church of the Firstborn.

Father, pour out your Spirit now upon this young man. We pray that this might continue, even as with Teagin, all the days of his life and that he might, in fact, be able to return unto you with great joy

and anticipation because of the baptism of Your Holy Spirit which You grant unto those who repent and come unto You in baptism. We ask this in the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.”

Following the conferring of the Holy Spirit on Tanner and Teagin, Michael Jordison picked up his guitar and sang:

“How Great Is Our God! Let all the earth rejoice.

The splendor of a King, clothed in majesty. He wraps Himself in light.

Darkness tries to hide and trembles at His voice.

Age to age He stands and time is in His hands.

Beginning and the End. The Godhead three in one, Father, Spirit Son, The Lion and the Lamb.

How great is our God! Sing with me. “How great is our God”

And all will see, how great, how great is our God.

Let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.”

After singing the song, Michael invited the congregation to join him in singing the choral affirmation, “How great is our God!” (Brother Phipps took his place at the podium and began the second phase of the service in which he called for responses to the Reunion reported under that title in this newsletter.)

Reunion Report at Sunday Service

Sherman Phipps took his place as minister for the hour and addressed the congregation: There is an interesting scripture, I think, in Third Nephi 4:50. It says, “Whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost. It says that God will do that for those who are baptized. It is a promise! It happens regardless of what we do here this morning and how we follow the procedures that we have adopted. The scriptures, and I think if you go through them you will find this to be true over and over, say that if you repent, humble yourself and are baptized, you receive that baptism of the Holy Spirit. I want to read the rest of that paragraph. It says, “Him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.” I always thought that was an interesting scripture. Even though you may not have felt what you thought you were going to feel, you may have been looking for some kind of an outstanding experience that you had imagined or anticipated would happen, and when you didn’t feel that - I know that that happens sometimes and there are people who are sometimes disappointed in what they do or don’t feel. But, let me tell you again, if you have humbled yourself and have repented and have gone down into the waters of baptism and been baptized, you do receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That’s the Lord’s promise to you. So you have had that, and then it becomes a lifetime of trying to respond unto Him and of allowing Him to work with you so that can begin, over a long period of time, to see how that Holy Spirit affects your life and how it works with you. Each one of you has special gifts. It’s the same Spirit. It is the same God, but it will work with each of you differently.

That’s one of the things that came to me so strongly at Reunion. I was looking around watching the people, and I began to have more of an appreciation in my heart for all the different people and the different ways they do things - the different way they approach things. It also helped me to understand that I don’t particularly have

the best way to approach things a lot of times, and that it is important for me to learn from my brothers and sisters.

There's another scripture I want to read. then I am going to open this up and see what the rest of you learned at the Reunion that will be helpful to us in responding to the Holy Spirit and supporting one another in our attempts to be steadfast to the end.

This is Jesus speaking, and He says, "I bear record of the Father and the Father bears record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me. And I bear record that the Father commanded all men everywhere to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me and is baptized, the same shall be saved, and they shall inherit the Kingdom of God. This is my doctrine and I bear record of it from the Father. And whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also, and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for He will visit him with fire and with the Holy ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record to him of the Father and me. For the Father and I and the Holy Ghost are one. And I say unto you, You must repent and become as little children or ye can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God. And this is my doctrine and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them." That is probably about the third or fourth time you have heard that this morning.

I would just like to hear from some of the rest of you about something you got out of the reunion experience that is beneficial to you and hopefully will help us in our quest, not to build but to assist in the bringing forth of Zion.

Brother Phipps' request was answered first by Danny Kinnaman who expressed his joy at being in the congregation with his wife and children after a long period of absence. He spoke of the nature of his departure from the way he wished to live during the time he has been away. He wanted the Reunion to show him the way and reunite his spirit with the Spirit of God but he felt so guilty and so unworthy that he just didn't see how it could happen. When Brother Neil (Simmons), the first speaker got up, he really "laid the hammer down!" and Danny felt very convicted but guessed he was a afraid to just go ahead. "I had become pretty conditioned in the things I was doing and the way I was thinking. And sometimes it's easier in a person's mind to just give up than to go ahead and go through with what you plan to do." But when he found opportunity to be of service to folks, and found how much he enjoyed sharing with others, and the chance to smile, to be happy, to watch the children. Each day drew him closer to God's own way.

When Mark Dieterick preached the last sermon, Danny identified with his life and was especially convicted because of his reference to the hoarding of tithing while money was so badly needed for missionary outreach. Danny and his family had struggled with financial problems but had never even laid aside an account for tithing at this time! They are working hard to try to follow a budget plan and to be good stewards. They are desirous of following the scriptures.

When Ron Smith shared what Marlin Guin had delivered by inspiration for the Conference of Branches, Danny was blessed. He had not even heard or read of it but is now convinced that the time is very near at hand when the Lord will show His hand. His final statement was, "We are so privileged - so blessed to have each other, to have the Lord and to have His Spirit guiding us. I can only pray and hope that I will more fully respond to the Spirit that was there at camp and to the Spirit that the Lord has placed within my heart. God Bless! "

Brother Phipps responded, "Thank you, Danny. I think it was important for you to say that and for us to hear it."

Without going to the microphone, Lynda Rolfe commented that the cool wind we were experiencing would be regarded by the Navaho as indicative of the Spirit of God ministering to us.

Seventy George Knotts announced cheerfully, "Hey! I had several 'trust and be glad' experiences at this reunion." One of them was that when George showed up at his class room and nobody was there! The lack of students allowed him to attend the class on missionary work in the family that he had earlier told the Lord he would like to attend to see what materials Jim Noland had and how he approached the subject. The class and the testimonies were exceptionally dynamic, and Brother Noland has a faith - action plan similar to George's "Heart's Desire" program but, George says, "More definite".

Brother Knotts shared one example of the plan in action. In Honduras Jim and Chuck Sperry were visiting Saints. One town had one member in it, and that member was a drunk! Jim insisted on seeing him. His wife says, "He's not feeling well. I don't think you had better see him." Jim said, "No! We have come three thousand miles. We want to see him! If he is sick, we will administer to him!" She took her husband to the back porch. He started waving his arms and saying something. Jim asked Sperry, "What is that man saying?" Chuck said, "He is praising God." Jim said, "Tell that man that he is blaspheming God, that he's a drunk, and we have come to help him!"

The man seemed surprised and kind of brightened up. Jim asked, "Do you want to overcome your alcoholism today - this very day?" He said, "Yes!" So Jim said, "I am going to pray that if you even think about a drink and you touch a bottle of liquor and put it to your lips, you are going to get deathly sick. Is that all right?" He answered affirmatively. Jim then said "I am going to pray that if you ask your wife to go get a bottle that she will start praying that you will get ill."

When they left, the man turned to his wife and said, "I didn't believe a word they said! Go get me a bottle." She went into the other room, not to get him a bottle but to pray. He got his own bottle, put it up to his mouth, took a drink of it, and threw up a bucket! She took it out and emptied it, and he came back and threw up another bucket. He threw up all night long! In the morning when he could open his eyes, he said, "I'm never going to take another drink!" And he didn't. Weeks later she went to a retreat and said, "I've got a testimony!" So Chuck and Jim are going back and work in that town because a miracle happened there.

An "unbelievably dynamic man", Brother Noland is also a marriage counselor whom George recommends as one who will get people with troubled marriages "into a faith - action plan that will blow your mind"!

Brother Knotts' class was to have been on materials for use in missionary work. When he showed a tract to Elder Ram Baral (from Nepal) he said, "Oh. this is good!. It will save me a lot of work." He ended up giving him a whole packet of masters. With permission, he placed tracts on chairs for the assembly and distributed them at the doors. By his count, he actually gave out more of his materials this reunion than he has at all the other five put together. Elder Baral recommended the book, Heavenly Man, to George, and he passed on the recommendation displaying a copy he has for loan. (Cessaries Galusha asked and received the book.)

George concluded with, "I liked Ron's sermon. He hit me real good. And also the last sermon was very good to me (Mark

Dieterick).

Terry Chown and family came from Ohio, this year and last. Sometimes they feel a little isolated out there; so it has been really nice to come out here to learn and be regrounded. He said he felt a little like his dog with whom he takes walks. She gets distracted, smells something a little bit off the road, gets off into the ditch and has to be yelled at. "Come on. Let's go. Keep going." She would race to catch up, then she would be off onto the next thing. He said, "I wonder how like me that must be. You know, you are going down the path, tend to get distracted or interested in other things, or you get comfortable with the status quo. You are just living your life doing the thing - trying to be a good person but you've got the Lord there telling you, "Get back up here on the road!" I hope that that's what we can do as we go back to Ohio and try to get back on the road, and I think we will!"

Lynda Rolfe: expressed her feeling that this reunion is "our reunion" and spoke of her efforts to find something she can do to be helpful. This time it was to teach the eighth grade class with her sister, Diane. The sisters really got enthused about the class and the ideas they came up with. Lynda said, "I really enjoyed the time we spent and the closeness we got in preparing for it. It was fun because every time we would plan a day, the people we would ask to help were so willing to do it." There were hurdles to be jumped. Lynda's husband was sick and Diane's family got the flu, "but it just seemed like I jumped those hurdles. You know, they just kind of flew, and I just thought it was kind of cool."

Diane came up with this idea of doing a puppet play which she wrote. They were busy with other things, but each day they would pray, "Lord, we have to have this much time to practice the puppet show." Michael exchanged days for his presentation so they could have time to practice on Thursday. And on Friday when the theme of the day was, "The Field is White already to harvest" they were ready. "The eighth grade class gave the puppet show to the kindergarten class first and then the first and second grades. We had the neatest audience! They were so good!" (There was a child in front of Lynda at the park whom she asked if she liked the puppet show. The answer was an enthusiastic, "Yes!") "I thought it was neat that they were able to be witnesses and to be missionaries to the little kids on the day that the theme was, 'The field is white already to harvest.'"

Lynda commented on the "special things" the children did in addition to giving the play. One girl, who is a little slow, memorized every one of her lines and said them all by heart. She was one who told about the play, One of the others offered a special prayer that Lynda felt really helped hold the whole class together.

Ron Smith spoke, relating to that hurdle thing. He was asked to serve at a Odessa Hills Reunion the week before the Seventy's reunion and accepted knowing it was a "crazy thing" to do, but felt like he needed to do it. Preparation for so many things at one time was impossible for him. "So. I made a deal with the Lord. I said, "I am just not prepared for anything here, so whatever You give me, I will give the whole thing. I am not going to hold any of it back." And really the Lord, each day, gave me the things that I needed. I saw my notes for the night I was to preach. My note card had Doctrine and Covenants 65 on it! That was all it had, and I felt like the Lord answered my prayer. He always does. I have trouble, I guess, trusting and being glad. But I felt like the Lord supplied my need."

Ron went ahead to confess that he had felt convicted on the first night when he realized that many of the things that he had done during the last year have not been for building the kingdom. "They haven't been bad things, but they just have not been for building the kingdom." He made a commitment to try and do better and to replace those things with things that would help build the Kingdom. "I hope that the Lord will help me do that."

Pam Chown: Our family did have a great week this week, and I have been so happy! I felt a little bad in the service yesterday morning because everybody was standing up and I knew they have these heavy things on their hearts, and I am sitting there smiling and feeling real happy. We had two baptisms, two Patriarchal Blessings and our family really had a great week! I had one experience also in which I felt like the Lord chastised me, too, and I wanted to share that especially to Teagin and Tanner but to everybody.

Our family - you know my grandparents and everybody - they have had some really big experiences. Grandpa saw an angel and Dad has all of these things and sometimes in my life I felt like, well, nothing really big has happened to me. I don't have any really wonderful, exciting stories to tell. There are just little things that have happened. But it occurred to me again this week in one of the prayer services when they were not talking about that exactly but were talking about when people feel like they are small and have nothing to offer. Well, as a first child and grandchild, I have never felt like I was not worth anything, but it still fights at me all of the time. You know, Aunt Pam shares this story and Dad shares this story and I was thinking again that I just had little things to share. And the Lord kind of let me know - I felt like He was saying, "What do you mean, 'I only have little things' that I have given you?" Even the littlest things - a feeling of peace when you are feeling despair. 'Tis a big thing like an angel coming to you! The blessings are all with the Lord because you are always with Him and present with Him. And He does know your name, and when He chooses to touch you in any way, that's not a little thing! It's a BIG thing!

Yvonne Galusha learned that sometimes it is easy to do what one wants to do and not as easy to do what one doesn't want to do. Since last January, she was feeling that the Lord wanted her to work on her singing. She was not confident of her singing, but felt the prompting to prepare a certain piece, the music of which had touched and impressed her. She said she had no intention of singing the song in public, but as the Reunion drew near, she felt that she should volunteer. She said Jan, the music director for the reunion, knew her limitations but took a leap of faith. On the first night of the Reunion, Yvonne sang that song. She said, "Thank goodness, some people were praying for me, but I think it went OK. And I guess I just want to say it was a lesson for me because it went a lot better than I thought it would. So I will just say that I was blessed, and I learned that you have got to be willing to do whatever He asks!"

Alan Smith promised to "try to have more opportunities for sharing testimonies about reunion because I know there are many more of those."

After a prayer offering, both financial and spiritual portions of our lives and all that we are or have to our Lord, the offering was received in the Pastor's hat by Matthew Anderson.

We sang the camp song, the first stanza of which is, "Father, I adore you, and I lay my life down before you. How I love you!"

After the congregation joined hands at the request of our

Pastor, Brother Robert Rolfe pronounced the benediction: "Father, as we join to together symbolically as one by holding each other's hands, as we feel the prompting of Your Spirit, as we experience the openness that comes with being under the sun and feeling the breeze, we thank You for the movement of Your Spirit in our hearts and for those thoughts that have been prompted by that Spirit. We pray that, as our brother has said, each of us would be convicted to be more fully engaged in the building of Your Kingdom. And we pray that the fellowship that follows will be a part of that endeavor. "Thank You for Tanner and Teagin, for Cede. We pray that each of us will support them now as they are members of the Body of Christ. And we pray this in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen."

Created In HIS Image Made In the Image of God

Genesis 1:27 and 29, reads thus: "And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and it was so. . . . And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them."

I thought about that scripture in kind of an odd place. I was filling my tank with gas when I saw a buggy of the Amish with their baskets, their horseradish, canned goods and things that they sell. Two little Amish girls in long black dresses, dark navy aprons and little bonnets were sitting in that buggy. As I was looking at them, a car, with loud music playing and two black men in it, pulled up on the other side of me. One gentleman got out and was filling up his car. I said, "Hi." to him and he said, "What's up?" I took that as a cordial bit of, "How are you?" His shorts were hanging down below his knees and half way down his crotch. His hair was braided back in dread locks.

I finished filling up my gas and went inside the station to pay. Around the table sat three or four older gentlemen, some of them with bib overalls, some with suspenders and wearing seed corn caps. I paid for my gas, and the lady at the counter was a very large lady. As I was walking out, I thought, "What does it mean to be created in His image, or in the likeness of Jesus?" I didn't look anything like those people! We were all different! How could we be created in the same image?

Maybe you have had a similar thought when you are shopping in the mall or maybe in a stadium watching a sporting event or a concert - fifty or sixty thousand people! And you wonder, "Are we all created in God's image? We don't look alike!"

Well, God did create all of us and the scripture says He created us all in His image. Cheryl is a twin and has a little bit more understanding what it is like to be created in someone's image. Linda's twin nieces who were very hard to tell apart. Maybe you have had the experience that I had just yesterday of seeing someone that looks a lot like someone else that you know. Maybe you called out their name or tapped them on the shoulder. They turned around and you find out they are not who you thought, and you kind of have this awkward moment - embarrassed a little bit. We were in Wal Mart yesterday when this gentleman says, "Hi!" and looked at me. When I turned around, he says, "Oh, I am sorry. I thought you were somebody else." I laughingly said, "That's OK", and we went on.

I didn't realize that the scriptures talk quite a bit about the physical image of God. There are many places that reference parts. Exodus 6:6 says, when God was talking about leading the people out of Egypt, he said, "And I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgment." The scriptures talk about a finger of God, too, many places; but the one that came to my mind was that Moses said the two tablets of stone were written by the finger of God. Remember that? The scriptures also talk about God's breath, God's eyes, His face, His form, His feet, His hands, His lips, His loins, His mouth, His nostrils, His tongue and His body. In Exodus 24:9-10 it says, "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel, and there was under His feet, as it were, a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were, the body of heaven in his cleanness." Since it talks about the body of God, I guess we can come to some kind of conclusion that would say that there is some form of God that is described in the words that relate to our physical bodies. But I don't think we have a very good portrait, if you were to think of that in terms of an image.

More Than a Physical Image

If you look in the mirror, are you seeing that image that you think of as God? Well, not having a clear image, God did what any good marketing firm would recommend to get His message out, He developed an image campaign. Television commercials or magazine ads feature lots of image campaigns about diet with some thin, sleek model talking about their diet plan because of that image. They feature cover girls like Christie Brinkley advertising make up, and the image sticks in our mind. Fitness has a big image campaign - strong, muscular, toned bodies - body by Jake. Commercials and advertisement of clothes are elaborate because they are trying to promote that image. Well, God wants to promote His image, too. So God introduced His Son Jesus into the world. That's God's image campaign.

In John 3:16 it says: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish; but have everlasting life." In the Doctrine and Covenants Section 22:23b it says, "For this is my work and my glory. to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man." You see, Jesus came into the world, an image of God and an example for us to see. God's campaign through Jesus was to bring us everlasting life - an eternity that we could be with Him. Doesn't that sound good?

The image of God in the life of Jesus on this earth isn't about just physical appearance. I don't think God wanted us only to remember Him in that He had arms, He had feet and He used His fingers. I think He wants us to understand His image in terms of other things. Other things I would like to briefly touch on this morning are His image in terms of love, His image in terms of forgiveness, His image of being faithful to His promises.

Why? Why do we need to understand God's image in terms of love, forgiveness, and of being faithful to His promises? Because, as we just read in Genesis, we were created in that image, too. Somewhere in us is knowing love like God knows love. Somewhere in us is the joy and release of forgiveness. And somewhere in us is the capacity to be faithful and true to our promises. All of this is ours because God chose to create us in His image. Maybe we need a slogan like, "Made in the USA". Maybe we need to have T shirts that say something like this, "Made in the image of God."

The scriptures support the image of God as loving, forgiving and being faithful to His promises. One of my favorite books of the Bible is First John the fourth chapter which talks at length about

love. Let me read just a little bit of this. Beginning at the fourth verse: “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. ...; Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.” And this I like in verse thirteen: “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”

The story of Zaccheus may not be one that you would think of first about love, but I think it talks about love. Zaccheus climbs the sycamore tree to be able to see Jesus as He passes by. Jesus calls to Zaccheus and says, “Come down. I want to go and have dinner at your house today.” You will remember that His disciples kind of murmured among themselves thinking, “Jesus. What are you doing? This guy is a sinner.” And Jesus said, (Luke 19:9-10) “This day is salvation come to this house forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham; For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those that were lost?” His love is to seek out all those that are lost. How great is our love? Are we seeking those that are lost? We find those that are lost just in our daily activities. We run into people that are lost all of the time. We see them come into the hospital in really bad conditions. They made choices that created illness and sicknesses that they have. Do you think that if they had that relationship - if they knew they were created in the image of God - why would they do that? Why would they allow themselves to be in those kinds of predicaments?

The image of God is of one being faithful to His promises. Second Peter 1:3-8 talks about the exceeding great promises that God has given us. Peter gives a long list of characteristics that God promises will make it so you “will not be found unfruitful in the knowledge of your Lord, Jesus Christ”. “And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.”

Joshua concludes the twenty first chapter by saying, “There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.” Everything came to pass that God had promised!

Numbers 23:19 says: “God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” God is true to His promises. How faithful are we to ours? We make promises in lots of different ways - in business agreements, in our family, in our marriage covenant. How faithful are we to them all?

The image of God is one of forgiveness. Ephesians 4:32 says: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” In Colossians 3:13 we find, “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man hath a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” Forgiving isn't bringing up old events and keeping score. Forgiving is moving on in love, and that's what God has placed inside of us. That ability is a part of our image.

Alma Challenges Us to Choose

Alma talks about God's image in slightly different terms. He

speaks of God's image in our countenances. Countenance is kind of an odd word. I kind of like it. You find Alma 3:27-30 saying: “I ask of you, my brethren of the church, Have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances?” Into your being - your demeanor? Does it show on your face? Alma defines the process. “Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God, to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body? Can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day, Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth? Or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord in that day, and say, Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth, and that he will save you? Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God, with your souls filled with guilt and remorse; having a remembrance of all your guilt; Yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness; yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God? Can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you, Can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?”

We have quite a choice there. I don't know with which one you feel comfortable, but Alma says that we should look up, having the image of God engraven upon our countenances.

I suspect from the reading in the scriptures that there is some anatomical likeness that we have of God - some form that we share. But I believe our focus needs to be on becoming the image of love, having forgiveness and being faithful to our promises as God is. We were created with these things, as God has told us in Genesis. And He sent His son into the world to show us how we were created and what we can look like. Today as we shared in the emblems of the Communion service, I hope you did that remembering Jesus, and I hope that you see in Jesus those things that you want to be - the image that you want to portray. You are, each one of you, made in the image of God.

Fasting and Prayer Observed

As is the Mount Ayr congregation's custom, the second Sunday service is given to fasting and prayer. Priest Gordon Winkler called us to worship reading Psalm 34:15-19 . “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”

After the invocation and offertory, Brother Winkler read again the letter that first asked the Restoration congregations of the church to give the second Sunday service over to fasting and prayer for the unity of the whole church. He announced that the message of this day would be found in the songs, scriptures and prayers offered. The prayers, he declared, would be a “testimony of our

faith.”

We sang two hymns of preparation: “All Creatures of our God and King, lift up your voices, with us sing, Alleluia, Alleluia ... O praise Him! O praise Him! Alleluia!” and “Rejoice, Ye Saints of Latter Days. Lift up your heads and sing! With one accord unite to praise your everlasting King.”

Jared Beck read Doctrine and Covenants 32:2a-f: “And verily, verily I say unto you, that this church have I established and called forth out of the wilderness; and even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice; yea, verily, verily I say unto you, that the field is white already to harvest; wherefore, thrust in your sickle, and reap with all your might, mind, and strength.

“Open your mouths and they shall be filled; and you shall become as Nephi of old, who journeyed from Jerusalem in the wilderness; yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs, for lo, I am with you; yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying, Repent, repent and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;”

Two more songs were sung: “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior. Hear my humble cry. While on others Thou art calling, do not pass me by.” and “My Jesus, I love You. I know Thou art mine. For Thee all the folly of sin I resign. My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou; If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ‘tis now.” Six prayers of repentance were offered in quick succession.

Linda Winkler read Ephesians 4:1-6: “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, In one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

The hymn “Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin. the voice of Jesus whispers peace within.” Five earnest prayers were voiced for healing and unity.

Ed Anderson read Mormon 4:84-88: “Behold I say unto you, that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ, it shall be granted him; and this promise is unto all, even unto the ends of the earth. For behold, thus saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God unto his disciples who should tarry; yea, and also to all his disciples, in the hearing of the multitude, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; and he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned.

“And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover; And whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth.” Opportunity was given for anyone wishing to voice a special prayer concern to do so. Cheryl Phipps asked a special blessing on the “Mammoth Camp” opening on Graceland’s campus that day. Several of the campers were in the service as they awaited the time for their registration.

“The Whole Wide World for Jesus, This shall our watchword be Upon the highest mountain, down by the widest sea. The Whole Wide World for Jesus! To Him shall all men bow in city or in prairie

- the world for Jesus now!” We made the declaration for Jesus in song. Again there were five earnest prayers seeking the will of the Father. Then we joined in singing our promise to the Lord: with the urgent plea that He make possible our keeping that promise. “Oh, Jesus I have promised to serve Thee to the end; Be Thou forever near me, My Master and my Friend. I shall not fear the battle If Thou art by my side. Nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my guide.”

We were dismissed by the benediction offered by High Priest Robert Rolfe and the postlude played by Sister Janice Jordison.

Joseph Smith, a Prophet? The Church, Christ’s?

High Priest Robert Rolfe spoke of the difficulty he was having with his voice and explained that he had planned for Jared Beck and Alan Smith to do some of his reading for him.

One of the things that interested me at the last conference was the way the voting was structured. You have heard, “One man, one vote.” That wasn’t the way it was. In fact, when I raised my hand, I had twenty five votes. But there were other people, when they raised their hand, they had several hundred votes. There were some who were a little concerned about that. I could tell because of the murmuring that was going on. It was the people from foreign missions, Kenya, Nigeria, etc, who had many votes. Their churches elected them as their delegates and they got votes for the number of members they had in their church. You could see this small group of people actually voting. I could hear some of the murmuring, “It won’t be long until they can take over the conference.” And I thought, “Yes. That’s true.” And that’s what I want to talk about this morning because, if you haven’t had your head in the sand, you have probably noticed how fast the church is growing in these countries like Nepal, Kenya, Nigeria, and so forth. Ram Baral has churches in China that he is planting right now. I don’t know how he gets in and out of there alive. It must be the good Lord protecting him. At the present rate, within five years, we will be in the minority. By we, I mean the people who live here in America. We will be far, far less than those who live in other countries.

What Message Is Going Out?

As I thought back about this, I remembered from reading that in the fourteen years, 1830 -1844, the church grew very rapidly. I was thinking about why that happened then but it is not happening now. On the other hand, why is it happening in all of these foreign countries where they live on dirt floors and don’t have enough to eat, are being killed by the diseases around them all the time, are getting their heads chopped off because they are Christians, and they are just growing by leaps and bounds! As I have thought about this, it has kind of dawned on me, as I have met some of the people from over there, that the message that the Seventy, and the others who are going, are preaching to them is that there is a true gospel of Jesus Christ and that when you are baptized in this church, you are getting into something very, very special. And God’s power and authority are going with them.

So when Jim Dunning laid his hands on this person’s head that had been blind for a long time, and he was instantly healed. I don’t know about you, but if it was in Mt. Ayr and somebody was healed who had been blind from birth, it would probably cause a small stir. Everybody knows about it real quick! And when someone is, in

effect, raised from the dead, those kinds of miracles, the local people say, "This church is different from the others that are coming over, having concerts and doing all the things they do to get people in."

As I thought about that, I thought of Jesus talking to the emissaries of John the Baptist. If you remember, John had the misfortune to be thrown into prison, and a young lady wanted his head for the price that she was being requested. And so it says in Chapter eleven of Matthew, "Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples," (I always wondered about this because this was Jesus' cousin. It wasn't like he was a stranger.) "And he said unto him, Art thou he of whom it is written in the prophets that he should come, or do we look for another?" Now it might be that John was depressed. You know sitting in the prisons of that day could make you a little depressed, I would think. I am told they didn't feed you, so if you got any food, it was because somebody else brought it to you. It wasn't like the color TV, the weight rooms and golf courses, and things like that like we have now days.

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and tell John again of those things which ye do hear and see; How the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Well, where was that going on? With Jesus and His disciples. And I think one of the things that you may see is, this was tongue in cheek to start with, that you may have those missionaries from those countries coming over here and preaching to us to call us to repentance; because they can see rather quickly that we are taking the talk but not walking the walk. They have already said that they guess they need to come over here and preach to convert the people over here. While that may be a little bit tongue in cheek, you don't have to be here very long before you begin to think that it is true. Maybe we need that kind of evangelism.

Those Saints over there have been introduced to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in terms of a hymn which we don't sing very much anymore, the idea that they have is, "I have found the glorious gospel that was taught in former years with its gifts and blessings all so full and free. And my soul is filled with gladness and banished are my fears since the precious angel message came to me."

What Angel Message?

You don't hear an awful lot about angels, other than at the commercial bookstores here. It seems like everything they sell there has something with an angel on it; and it is a very big theme. What angel message are we talking about there? And do you believe that angels still come to the earth in 2006?

I might ask you also this morning whether you are a member of Christ's church? I am not talking about just another church, but the Church of Jesus Christ - the church that Jesus talked about in Matthew 16 where He talks about "building My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it?" Now, so that you won't misunderstand, the next few groups that I am talking about are our people. They are us. They are the people in our group that are saying these things. So I am not going very far to point this out. There are some people today, who should know better, who openly teach: (1) That we don't have any need for a church organization or structure. (2) That we don't need to attend church. (3) Preaching isn't necessary. Others have taught, we don't need miracles, we don't need prophecy! We all believe in Christ, so why should someone try to convince someone else that this church is better than the church to which they are going?

Well, I would like to ask you this. One thing I like about our Mormon cousins is this phrase they say, "I believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet!" That's what they say. It is their introduction. It is almost like in some business meetings you hear, "I have been a member of this church forty years!" Some of the same questions that people are asking today were asked in Joseph's day. Which church should I join? Is one church as good as another? And how do I find out?

So Jared is going to read you in Joseph Smith's own words how he got the answer. (Although we would like to print the entire story, since Joseph Smith's story is in print in the RLDS Church History, Vol. 1 and in the pamphlet, Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story, we will ask you to read the whole story for yourself.)

Joseph tells of his interest in the above questions at age fifteen, his exploration of the various churches, one of which others of his family had joined. He tells of the strong impact James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God," had on him. He tells of seeking a quiet place in the woods where he prays aloud for the first time. In response to his questions, he has a vision of God and His Son Jesus Christ who counsel him to join none of the churches, for their creeds are an abomination in the sight of God.

Brother Rolfe asks, "All right, young people. How is that for the first time prayer? It says he never prayed aloud. He offers his first prayer and the Father and the Son appear to him. So what was the answer? He got the answer to his question, didn't he? And who gave it to him? God Himself, so that is pretty authoritative when you think about it.

Now, if this didn't happen, if this was just one of those events that were imagined, it doesn't matter, does it? But if it did happen, this is one of the most remarkable experiences that has happened on this land. Remember, though, He didn't say the people in all those churches were an abomination. He said the creeds were an abomination, and He gets into the reasons why.

I like First Nephi 7. That's a really good chapter if you are only going to read one chapter in the book. In there Nephi has a list of why we shouldn't just join any church. There are lots of lists in the Book of Mormon, and he really answers the question of why the churches exist. In other words, what is their underlying purpose? And he says, "For the time speedily cometh that all churches which are built up", and he starts listing off what their basis are, "to get gain, to get power over the world, to seek to become popular in the eyes of the world, to seek for lusts of the flesh in the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity." Who are they? He says, "Yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil." He doesn't make any bones about it. If you want to read more of what Nephi had to say, read Second Nephi chapter 12 where he talks about this same subject.

I would like to go back to Joseph's experience. He was about fourteen at the time. Remember he said he was in his fifteenth year. That's an archaic way of saying he was fourteen when he had the experience with God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son. If you had an experience like that, you would be straight laced, wouldn't you? From then on, you would never do anything wrong. You would be afraid to. God Himself had shown Himself to you. you don't have to wonder if God is watching! You know He knew what was going on there.

I tell you, it doesn't work that way. I have had that same experience in my younger years, and all I can tell you is that if you think that you don't sin after that or you don't have problems, think again. I think it gets worse rather than better because I think the

adversary steps up his campaign against you. So I ask you again. Do you believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God? He started out, by that simple act of faith of going to pray, a journey that would change the face of the world. I would like you to listen to the next step of his story in his own words. (Alan Smith read from the records noted above.)

Joseph tells how he frequently “fell into many foolish errors and displayed the weaknesses of youth and the corruption of human nature”, doing things that were offensive to God. One night he was praying for forgiveness and asking that he might know of his standing with the Lord when he was visited by the angel Moroni. Three times in one night Moroni appeared. He shows Joseph the place in which there are “gold” plates from which he is to translate a sacred record of former inhabitants of this country by means of the Urim and Thummim buried with the plates. He is instructed in the way he is to handle the record and in many scriptures that were about to be fulfilled. Among them, he quoted, with some variation, part of the third chapter of Malachi and also the last chapter. He quoted Isaiah 11 (about to be fulfilled), Acts 3:22-23 (the prophet was Christ, and the day of destruction for those who would not hear him would soon come); Joel 2:28-32 (Soon to be fulfilled). Also, he said, the fullness of the Gentiles was soon to come in.

On his second visit, Moroni repeated all that he had said before and told Joseph of great desolations that were to soon come on the earth. During his third visit he repeated all those instructions and added a caution that Satan would try to tempt him to use the plates to get rich. This was forbidden. The only acceptable motive was to glorify God and to build His kingdom. Each time it was as though a conduit was made from the room into heaven and Moroni ascended through the structure. The three episode “interview” took all night.

Rob commented that he always wondered if Star Trek had seen that report and that’s now they got the idea for beaming people up and down. You kind of see the light gathering and there they are. What it describes to me is that this person is coming and going. They come into the room, then go out of the room - quite an interesting experience, I would say.

Most of the people here would know that in a few years Joseph was allowed to get those plates and did translate them. Earlier I asked you the question some people ask, “Do we have any need for a church structure - a church organization?” There are those saying we don’t need that. If you believe that Joseph Smith, Jr. was a prophet, you will find that he had some things to say about a church being necessary with structure and organization. I am just going to give you a few of these, and just read bits out of those sections. Section 1:1 - “Hearken, O ye people of My church”; 1:5e and also those to whom these commandments were given might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity, and out of darkness, the only true and living church on the face of the whole earth, with which I the Lord am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually.” Section 17:1, “The rise of the church of Christ in these last days,” Section 20:1c - “... I have caused this last covenant, and this church to be built up unto me; even as in days of old.” Section 32:2a - “... this church have I established and called forth out of the wilderness;” and if you go through the Book of Mormon, you will find similar statements about the church, including those made by Jesus, Himself.

God's Plan For His Church

What is interesting to me is that before April 6, which is the

date we all know that the church was formally organized, the Book of Mormon was not even printed yet, Joseph said, “We had received commandment to organize the church, and accordingly, we met together for that purpose.

So, what had been done up to that point? Quite a little bit! I don’t know if you are aware of this, but quorums had already been provided for for Apostles, Elders, Priests, Teachers and Deacons, and the duties of each of those priesthood offices had been defined. Provision had been made for a President of the High Priesthood, Bishop, High Council, High Priest and church recorder. There had been provision made for local churches, the transferring of membership from one church to another, and for the holding of conferences. Instruction had been given regarding the ordination, the granting of Priesthood licenses, the instruction of those baptized, the blessing of children, the manner of baptism, the manner of administering the Sacrament and other essential features. This had all happened before April 6, 1830. It was already in the possession of the church, so when it came time to organize, do you know what hadn’t been planned for? All of those bodies that it was going to take to fill all of those jobs!

Now, I just ask you this, “If Joseph was doing this on his own, talk about a leap of faith to think that he is going to find all those people who are going to do all of those things that he said we are set up to do now. And I would say, he was taking a really big chance that he could find all those people and fill all those positions if he was dreaming this up on his own! Well, to me it is pretty simple. You can believe that Joseph Smith produced the Book of Mormon on his own and organized a church out of his own intelligence and ability or you can believe that he was inspired by God to lay the foundation of that church and to do that translation.

You know, one of the things that I have talked to people about today when they talk about the Doctrine and Covenants they say, “You know there are changes in that book, therefore I really have trouble with the doctrine and Covenants because there have been changes made. You know, if you apply that criteria to the Bible, where would you be? There are sure a lot of changes in the Bible. One scholar says there are 50,000 changes in the New Testament alone! When you go through the old manuscripts, there is no doubt there are a lot of changes. Let me ask you this. Joseph is criticized for rewriting the Bible as far as the Inspired Version and all the changes, what did the people do that made the Revised Standard Version and the New International Version? They have changed it. In the same way, they have rewritten it. Isn’t that the criteria, if it is something that has been changed, that is the something that you should not be using? Elbert A. Smith talked about this. I like the simile in that he said, “If you are going to drown, don’t drown in shallow water!” At least get on some issue that is worth arguing and thinking about. His real advice is that if you have some problem with something, just set it aside and study the ten commandments or something that has meat in it - the sixteenth chapter of Alma or something that really is deep, and give the Lord a chance to work that out. Myself, I have read the Book of Mormon several times and the Doctrine and Covenants. and I have compared the doctrine of those books with the Bible, and I just have no doubt that any mortal person could not have written the Book of Mormon. It would be impossible, particularly in the time frame that we know that it was done. I had trouble writing a letter of three pages or so to my mother.

I don’t know how I would write seven hundred and seventy seven pages in long hand and get that done in four months. I don’t know how I would write anything in long hand in that period of time

and get it done. I think Joseph was and is a true prophet of God and that this church is the true church of Jesus Christ despite the wounds that His friends have inflicted upon it. We have done most of this damage ourselves, and I believe that the Lord, Himself, will soon come and repair the damages.

What Is Your Testimony?

I would just like to say this so far as our testimony to the people in this country, you can't give someone a testimony unless you have one. If you don't believe that you are in the Church of Jesus Christ, if you don't believe that there is a gospel of Jesus Christ, if you believe your church is no different than any others, then you are not going to be able to give testimony to that fact. So the first thing I would say is that you probably ought to be praying to God about those issues and reading the only authority that we have, and that's in the scriptures.

I would like to read something that Jesus Christ said after He was on this land - after He reorganized the church here, appointed people to be in charge of the church, and just before He left. This is in Chapter 12 of Third Nephi, verses 19-24 and 33-35. and I would like to close with that. I am going to start on the nineteenth verse.

"Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name, that he will bless the church for my sake; and how be it my church, save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name, then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man, then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name, then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel. Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call in my name; therefore if ye call upon the Father, for the church, if it be in my name, the Father will hear you; And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel, then will the Father shew forth his own works in it; ..."

So, is that a test or not? So, if His works are not shown in it, then it sounds pretty obvious to me." "But if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you, They have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return; For their works do follow them, for it is because of their works that they are hewn down; therefore remember the things that I have told you.

"Now this is the commandment, Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. Verily, verily I say unto you, This is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do, that shall ye also do; For that which ye have seen me do, even that shall ye do; therefore if ye do these things, blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day." And that would be a good time to be lifted up, particularly if the fire has already started! May God bless the reading of His word this day.

The Promise of the Future

Seventy George Knotts prefaced his sermon with a reference to the longest Psalm in the Bible, Psalm 119. Brother Knotts described

it as a teaching Psalm for the young of Israel. The Psalm is all about God.

He also shared a marker that he keeps in his Bible that reads: "The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy. Its precepts are binding. Its histories are true. Its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise. Believe it to be safe. Practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the Pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's character. Paradise is restored. Heaven is opened. and the gates of hell are disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good design, the glory of God is in it. It should fill the memories, rule the heart and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, a river of pleasure. It gives you in life and will open a judgment. Being remembered forever, it involves the highest responsibility. It rewards the greatest labor and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents."

He quoted a favorite scripture, "The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel." I come to you this morning in the name of Jesus. I see some concerns on your faces, and I hope what we have to say this morning will help some of those concerns. I know the word of God will help those concerns if we get into the word of God and read it daily. It will fulfill some of the needs we have. We have a longing in our hearts for something that doesn't seem to be there. I know that if you and the Lord are close together, He will satisfy that need.

Brother Knotts shared an incident that happened in their family the previous night, which, he said, was a crisis that, "Got our attention". An excited lady brought the news that their youngest son had become disoriented and was being attended by the paramedics as he lay on the ground uptown Lamoni. After a thorough checkup at the hospital he was released to await, under observation, a later more thorough checkup at the Veterans Hospital. Brother Knotts expressed appreciation for prayers offered for their son's welfare by the congregation and by others.

A Look Into the Future

He then turned to the white board at the top of which he had placed a time line consisting of seven units and at the bottom a solid line labeled, "1000 years of Peace".

A thousand years of peace. We are very close to that now. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be with Jesus during that thousand years of peace? But something is going to happen between now and that thousand years. Between now and then there is going to be a big war. Something else will be happening. This is speculation, but it is something to think about. It is that the Maya calendar ends in 2012. We are at 2006. If you talk about the seven years of tribulation - we are just saying "what if" now - and subtract the seven years of tribulation from the 2012, you get 2005. That was last year; but the calendar ends on approximately December 22, 2012. That's near the end of the year. So, say right now we are right there. (He makes a mark on the time line.) This is July, 2006. Has anything happened that might be a part of the tribulation during this time? A lot of things have been going on historically from last December until now. It could get worse.

In three and a half years, in the middle of the seven, the Antichrist will break the covenant he has made with Israel - we don't know what they have agreed to - then all hell breaks loose. A lot of things happen, worse than what will happen up to then. You can imagine the rest of this year going out as you see the news about

Israel and the war potential over there - people saying it could be the beginning of the third world war. It could get worse. After that, it could get worse and worse. Then after that it is going to really get bad; so I just wanted to encourage you. If you think it is bad now, wait until later!

Now, when Jesus comes back, what happens? The good is separated from the evil. The righteous, the ones who have lived according to what they have known, are just and live with Christ the thousand years. Then there is another war at the end of this thousand years, Armageddon. Satan has been bound up all of this thousand years so he can't mess with us. At the end of this time, he will be loosed again. He will be able to tempt people again, and they will have to choose Christ's way or some other way. Those who choose another way will gather around Israel from the north, and do you know how long it takes the Lord to take care of that group that gathers around Israel? WHAM! Do you know how He does it? With fire! I recommend you to be on the good side or you will be toast! It happens instantly. They might say it will take a day, but I don't think it will take a day. He can speak and it will happen!

Now, this is a thousand years of peace. Is that desirable or not? We hear war, war, rumors of war. The bad guys get washed out here in this time. There are some still down in a waiting place who have not accepted Christ. They will come forth in the second resurrection, so this is the first resurrection at the beginning of the thousand years. So a lot will happen here at the beginning of the thousand years. According to my time line of the seven thousand years that I had previously drawn out on a stick, I already ran out of stick. We are overdue, according to my measurements. I figured it might end about 2000. Here we are at 2006. My stick was short. This could be happening. We could be already be in the tribulation now. I am just saying what if the Maya calendar is right? It was well designed, probably, surely not by just humans. It runs out then. Could we hold our breath for seven years until Jesus gets here? We can think about it and have some hope. It would lend a lot of intensity to our decision making, wouldn't it, if we knew that we are in the tribulation time now? Would that make any difference to us? We might make decisions a little more seriously than if we felt, well, this is just another time we are going through, and surely, this, too shall pass! And it will pass! We hope we are on the right side of righteousness. There are some of the things you might want to check on the computer. Check out the North America Union. Alan was going to get me the references in church history where you can find that Joseph Smith came up with the idea of getting Mexico, the United States and Canada into a unit. So the CRF has an idea to do this, and they hope to have that in place in 2010. It is not going through Congress. The top brass in the three nations are working this out through committees.

Do you want to hear something else that is kind of interesting? They are going to build a road from Mexico to Canada. It is going to go through Iowa. I 35 will probably be renamed before that time, do you know how many lanes wide it will be? Ten Lanes wide. So, maybe if you are going to invest in some land you might invest right alongside that road. You can look that up on the internet, too and see a picture of that road going from the top to the bottom. No man knows the day or the hour, that's for sure. But they don't know the day nor the hour when you are going to give birth to a child, but the doctor knows the season. Jesus was chiding some of the religious leaders of his day, telling them, "You don't even know the seasons!"

June 22, 2008 will be the midterm there, and that is right before the national elections. So that will be a critical time. Also Jesus tell

ut that the time will be cut short for the sake of the righteous, so it might not go clear out there. It will be too hard for some of the righteous to endure some of the hardships that come along. It's nice to have Jesus looking out for you, isn't it?

Good News

I have good news for you! Jesus loves you, and here is proof. God loves you so much that He gave His Son for us. His Son loves us so much that He gave His life for us. And we love and we give? What are we giving in that sequence of things?

He created us. He created the earth for us to be on, and it has been beautiful in Iowa these last few days, hasn't it?

He has a plan for us, a plan of righteousness, a plan for us to live in harmony with Him. He has commanded us how to live. He has given us definite instructions, and that was very kind of Him. He didn't leave us to guess about it. He gave us definite instructions of how He would like us to live.

He gives you His word to show His way. Through the Holy Spirit He will guide you in all things. Recently I was counseling a fellow in Chicago on the phone. He was thinking about marriage, and I suggested to him, "Don't forget section 9 verse 3." When you are getting ready to make a major decision, or even a minor decision, in your life, first study it out in your mind (get the facts) decide what you feel is right, ask Go and that decision will be either confirmed or the Lord will help you forget the thing which was wrong.

In fact I got an A in college writing on this when the question was, "What is the contribution of the Restoration to Christian Ethics. The topic of my paper was "The Burning of the Bosom Ethics" - how we could know God's will in any situation. I chose Beth that way. I chose the car I am driving that way. I chose the house we live in that way. Try that in everything - Section 9 verse 3.

Lyndon Wheeler was the fellow who helped Sears Roebuck become the company it was. He was the vice president of Sears Roebuck, and one time he was bearing his testimony and I asked him, "Can I tell people the figure of your salary?" He gave me a long figure which I wrote down but have lost. I couldn't even describe it, it was such a big figure. (Brother Knotts shared some of the inventions with which brother Wheeler served his company.) When the head of Sears Roebuck died, Lyndon was asked to take the funeral and preach about section 9, verse three. As a young man. Lyndon had come to Apostle Charles Hield at the Bandera reunion and asked, "What kind of council can you give me that I can guide my life with?" Charles Hield said, "Section 9, verse 3." This man took him literally and was very, very, very successful. I would recommend that you take that literally, and you will be very blessed by it.

He gives us His Spirit to guide us and promises us blessings when we follow His directions. Not only will He give us life, but He will give us abundant life, so if we are not having abundant life, maybe we are not all there. Maybe we haven't oriented our lives to the direction He wants us to go.

He restored His church for us. Isn't that a blessing? He restored His church for us, and now we are groping along, trying to get some direction as we go forward, and we have hope that will happen just like we ask Him for.

He will come again to us. Now, is that a bright spot in our day? We think the weather looks good now, is it going to look good when He comes back, except for one thing. He won't come as a baby next time. He will come back, and He will be in charge. One place describes Him, He will have a sword in His mouth. He will be ready to meet out justice. You can read about this in revelation 19. He will

come back for His bride. His bride will be ready. His bride will be the Saints of God, and they will have on clean white robes. It is interesting to have those two words connected. It would be one thing to have on a white robe, but if it was dirty it wouldn't be a good thing. But it spells both those out - a clean and white robe - and that is us if we live as He wants us to live.

Now, if He tells us to love and forgive, are we willing to do that? Think of the person you resent the most. Can you think of someone you resent? He wants you to forgive those people. I want you anxious for nothing. That means literally trust Him. We can do our own thing, and if we do our own thing, we are on our own. We are independent of Him. The Lord has a very good interest in His work in these last days. It is going forth. He is pouring out His Spirit on the people of the earth, and the young men will see visions and the old men dream dreams. That is supposed to happen in the last days, and I see evidence that it is happening.

The Lord is doing some interesting work around the world. Remember, we talked about 200,000 people are committing their lives to Jesus every day, and that's an old figure from the year 2000. It may be much better today. We can be thankful that Jesus didn't come back yesterday. We can be thankful that he won't come back today, even though we would like to see Him. More people are committing their lives to Christ as the days go by. Maybe that's why my stick ran out of time - maybe my stick was too short. I don't know, but He knows, and we can trust Him.

Assuming this is the end time. We can watch this on the news and see what is happening down here. It could be the beginning of the tribulation. If it isn't, what have we lost? Now you people will have to keep me posted because we took the television out of our house about four years ago getting ready for the Seventy Reunion and we decided we would wait and see how long we could go without it before we would put it back in. (I have to confess we have been watching video tapes, movies and things like that some of which Beth doesn't think are very good.)

A Way to Remember

There is a little song. "Be careful little eyes what you see., Be careful little feet where you go. Be careful little hands what you do." I hope that you don't forget this when you go back home and whatever you are doing, you will think of this precious little song. Well, "The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel." The kingdom of heaven will be wonderfully blessed with the marriage of His Saints, the church, and Jesus Christ. The church will be His bride, and that's coming up. That could happen any time right about here (George started to place a mark near the end of the time line but hesitated.)

Oh, yes. We have to go through this tribulation first, you think. Well, I don't think we ought to be overconfident that we are going to have seven more years. He might cut it short. We will just have to wait and see. We should be anxious for nothing. If this bothers you, and I hope it does cause you a little bit of concern, but I don't know what you are going to do about it.

I do have a suggestion. Keep your repentance fresh. You might repent early and avoid the rush. It is going to get pretty salty down about here. (Our speaker pointed to a place on the timeline again.) There are going to be a lot of people turning to Jesus and crying for help. It would be better if you were there to help them respond to Jesus.

There are five points that I would like you to remember in accepting Jesus as your Savior. Now the Protestants, or I should say, the faithful believers, got ahead of us on this just a little bit, and this

is all they have. We have life after death, and we have the Restoration story, and we've got the Book of Mormon, and all these things. But this is all they have, and this is how the Lord has been using His word to bless them. We cannot save ourselves. That's our first point. Jesus is our Savior - the second point. Repent from your sins - the third point. Believe and receive Jesus as Lord.

Be baptized and faithfully follow the Creator's way. Now, they usually don't include that last one, but I helped them a little on that. Actually, they don't have anyone who authorized them to baptize, but they don't know that. Probably some of the people baptize anyway. This is what's found in the scriptures and there are three strong scriptures for every one of those that I isolated and put in. This will bless our ministry. This will bless our missionary work if we don't forget this. We could do everything else and if we forget this, we miss the mark, and we don't want to do that. You can have people sit through cottage meetings and say, "I agree with all of that. Would you baptize me? I don't mind being baptized. That doesn't quite meet the mark, does it? They need to have a turn around in their life. It is very critical that they are repentant, born again, that they have had a conversion experience with Jesus Christ, have taken them as Lord of their life and turned their life over to Him and accept Him to be their guide. And when they make a covenant, they are covenanting that they will follow His commandments. They will look up, embrace the truth and obey all of His commandments. And actually that's the key when Zion come down.

Maybe Jesus hasn't been in any hurry to get down here because we haven't been seeing eye to eye, looking up and embracing the truth. Can you imagine what it is going to be like when we all see eye to eye? It will surely be different, won't it? We don't all see eye to eye now. "I have a lot of trouble getting people to agree with me 100%." he quipped.

Well, one heart, one mind, see eye to eye. I imagine if Jesus was there giving us some straight out instructions it would be a lot easier to say, "Yes that's the way it is," rather than to stay with tradition or something else that we may have grown up with. We have things clouded in our minds.

Well, "The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel." I put this chart up here just to get your attention, but when the Lord gets back, He will get our attention!

How Can I Keep From Singing?

Elder Alan Smith was in charge of the July, 2006 song service. He introduced it by explaining that many of the congregation were away, and so were not there to participate. So, we have some songs that we will sing, some we will have sung for us, and for some we will just have the words from the scriptures. (Much as we would like to print all of the songs that were shared, including those from the scriptures, because we are having to crowd two month's reports into one Newsletter, we will have to ask you, our readers, to read most of them directly from hymn book and from the scriptures.) The congregation sang vigorously, "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name! Let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all!"

The first scripture was Doctrine and Covenants 98:4f-5. It is that powerful assurance that Zion will not be moved out of her place,

notwithstanding her children are scattered. The pure in heart will return, with their children, singing songs of everlasting joy. There follows a thrilling and detailed description of some of the conditions that will prevail.

We sang joyously, "My Life Flows On in Joyous Song ... While to that rock I'm clinging, ... how can I keep from singing?"

Brother Smith spoke of David as a songwriter but questioned whether we may have realized, or remembered some of the other writers as writers of songs. The first song to be read was one written by Moses. Valle (Smith) read Deuteronomy 32, the entire chapter. It is one of two songs that have been recorded for which Moses wrote the words. This song Moses was commanded to write about the blessings that the Lord had given and the consequence if the people broke their covenant. He was told that he was to teach this song to the children of Israel so they would always have that warning with them. Then we find out in the book of Revelation that that song is going to be sung again at the end time to remind Israel and God's people of the covenant and the things the Lord has done. You may want to remember the words because one of these days if you hear them sung by the angels, or whomever, you will know that Revelation is being fulfilled. It was Moses' last act of ministry to the Children of Israel to remind them of who God was and that He was their God.

Sue Beck sang the beloved plea, "Oh, for a faith that will not shrink though pressed by every foe. ... Lord, give us such a faith as this, and then whatever may come, we'll taste even here the hallowed bliss of an eternal home."

We sang, "Touch Me, Lord, with Thy Spirit Eternal" a prayer for God's Spirit to teach us, keep us firm, pure and whole and a pledge that, "with Thy Spirit to strengthen and guide me, I will to serve Thee with all of my soul!"

Diane Anderson shared a song that Hannah wrote when she brought her son, whom the Lord had given her, to serve in the temple. 1 Samuel 2:1-10, a song of praise and of caution that we must be sure that we are not building ourselves up but are recognizing that all we have comes from the Lord.

Kathleen Myers sang, "How Gentle God's Commands." It is an invitation to bring all our cares to an unchangeable God who will guard His children well.

Linda Barber read Hezekiah's song he wrote in response to the blessing the Lord gave him when he was dying and the Lord gave him fifteen more years to live. In Isaiah 38:10-20 he tells how sick and unhappy he was thinking he was going to die. He gets the promise and the song changes to "I will sing praises to the Lord all the days of my life in the house of the Lord."

We sang, "Bear Each Other's Burdens. Share each other's suffering, and love as the Savior has shown.... God calls us to healing, Divine love revealing wherever we meet human need."

Diane Anderson shared two testimonies she had heard at the Odessa Reunion last week. Kevin Anderson and his brother Carl had ministered to a woman regularly for a long time. Finally when they went to minister, they found that she was doing much of the talking. Rather than it being a Priesthood visit, it was like they were going to receive ministry from her. When they asked her what had happened, she told them about six months previously she had decided to read her scriptures 15 minutes every day. The first 15 minutes of scripture reading was really difficult for her. Each day it became easier and over time she found she no longer could participate in the usual kind of thing that goes on in the world at work. Soon she found herself ostracized without friends. She persisted in her

study. One day she was listening to some of those at work talking about some kind of problem. In her own head she said, "I know the answer to that." She found the troubled woman and told her the answer to her problem from the scriptures. Then she found many people coming to her for advice that she was sharing from the scriptures.

The second testimony had to do with a dream in which Kevin saw God's eye and knew that He was looking in all the chambers of his heart. He was very upset and said, "Oh, God. Please don't look at the sin in my heart." The Lord answered that He was not looking for the filth. He wasn't looking for the sins. He was looking for the good that could come out of that heart - for the work that he could provide from that heart for the Lord's purposes. Diane sang 2 Nephi 14:4, "Feast upon the words of Christ, for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do." She bore testimony of the truthfulness of the admonition and of her determination to do it for a new reason - to be of service to others.

Jared Beck shared what Alan called a little more of a sermon than a song of Alma's. Alma 3:46-63 is Alma's challenge to remember how it was to sing the songs of everlasting joy and to repent of everything that would keep you from being prepared to sing them again eternally.

Robert Rolfe picked up his guitar and explained that the song he was about to sing was the twentieth chapter of second Chronicles. It is about Jehoshaphat, a story that is omitted from his Bible Encyclopedia, a fact that amazes him because it is one of the more amazing stories in the Bible. Jehoshaphat was the fourth king after David - David's great grandson. He did all the Lord asked and had lots of wealth for the kingdom. That's probably why the massive army that the song talks about came to attack Israel. Like the musical we did a few years ago, this basically is that story in a song.

The Lord spoke to Jehoshaphat and told him not to worry about the army that was approaching. The Lord would fight the battle for him. All he was to do was to have the people sing, (And Brother Rolfe invited us to sing their song with him.) "Praise ye the Lord. His mercy endureth forever and ever. Praise ye the Lord our God. His mercy will never end."

The people followed Jehoshaphat to confront the armies of their enemies. There Jehoshaphat called a group of singers and sent them in front of the masses where they praised the beauty of holiness and sang, "Praise ye the Lord. His mercy endureth forever and ever. Praise ye the Lord our God. His mercy will never end." The invaders became confused, turned on each other, and the battle was so fierce that those who survived abandoned their dead and all their riches. The riches were so abundant that it took three days to gather them up and take them to Jerusalem. (Incidentally, after the first chorus more and more voices joined Brother Rolfe until at last we were all singing with him, "Praise ye the Lord. His mercy endureth forever and ever. Praise ye the Lord our God. His mercy will never end.") Mildred Smith read Doctrine and Covenants 83:16g-17c, introduced as a song we are all supposed to be learning in these last days - a new song about Zion.

After a statement of hope that the songs we had shared had ministered to us all, we sang, "Send Me Forth, Oh Blessed Master" and were dismissed with a benediction pronounced by our Pastor. With that kind of assurance from our Lord and Master, how can we keep from singing?

News & Notes

It's been a busy summer with many people being away and we look forward to everyone joining back again as the new school year arrives. We hope to have some Graceland students joining us for regular attendance this year. Please welcome them.

Some of our special events for the summer had to be cancelled for various reasons. We hope to get our zoo trip and our work day rescheduled at the planning session Sunday.

Please note that we will be having an election of offices on Wednesday, Aug. 16. Please be thinking of how you would like to serve for the church year beginning in September and let someone know so you can be nominated. There are plenty of ways to serve as part of the group and we don't want anyone to feel left out.

**CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
607 E. Madison St.
Mount Ayr, IA 50854**