

NOVEMBER 2006

TESTIMONIES AND SERMON NOTES

Can You Forgive Yourself?

Seventy George Knotts came in the name of Jesus, not to speak to us of the state of the nation but of the state of the souls of those assembled to partake of the Lord's supper, October 1, 2006.

"There are several here in this room who may pass away without ever forgiving themselves. God forgives you of the dumb choices you have made, but we often don't forgive ourselves. God's instruction in the scriptures is to confess to one another. In the Book of Mormon it is recorded that the people came, confessed their sins and were baptized. Our failure to confess is a handicap to our witness. If we don't forgive ourselves, we know we are not doing something as perfectly as we could. We don't have the Kingdom yet. Find someone whom you trust who knows the worst about you and accepts you anyway and confess those things that still burden you. It is a handicap to our witnessing if we don't forgive ourselves.

Early in our church history, when the Lord spoke to Joseph Smith at the time of his first vision, God told him that the creeds of the Christian churches were an abomination in His sight. The creeds in common use were, and are, the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. You ask, what is wrong with those creeds. They seem to pretty well spell out what Christians believe. But they both leave out one thing that is very important to God. They leave out the Kingdom of God, the central teaching of Christ's Gospel. How do you think God feels if a group of men got together and decided what God believed? "The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel!"

God didn't call us to be intelligent. He called us to be faithful, and if we are faithful, we are smart. The Kingdom is at hand, and the gospel is spelled out clearly in the Book of Mormon. The Gospel is very simple. Even a child can understand it.

I have been tested lately in the effort to "Trust and be glad." When I see some very intellectual people tell others that what God said he didn't really mean, and they go to great extent to say what He really meant. It is difficult, but you should still trust and be glad. If you are not being glad, there is a strong chance you are not trusting. God reveals His will simply in the scriptures, especially in the Book of Mormon.

The biggest thing about you is God's love for you. God even cares for you more than your mother. We are coming up to the time when we are going to have to face up to it. The Kingdom of God has not come, so we know we are not doing something right.

I have two questions. 1. If you would die tonight, where would you spend eternity? 2. If God would ask you why He should let you in, what would you say to Him? We need to be honest to God this morning in our covenanting with our Creator!

Brother Knotts reminded us of the method he previously taught us that we remember the covenant we make with God when we partake of the Lord's Supper. Holding up his left hand and pointing to his fingers, beginning with the little finger, he recalled the prayer for the bread: that we witness unto God that we are willing to: (Ring finger) - take upon us His name, (Middle finger) - always remember Him, (Pointer) - and keep His commandments. Then, (Thumb) He will give us His Spirit to be with us always. For the wine, we continue with the little finger to witness to God, the Eternal Father, that we are willing to: (Middle finger) always remember Him, (Thumb) so that He will give us His Spirit to be with us.

Did you notice that the word remember is in there twice? That is quite a contract we are writing, not with just some person but with the Governor of the Universe! We are promising to remember all of the time - every day! Help us, Lord, to remember You the rest of this day and then tomorrow all day; and then each day after that!

On Being a Friend of Jesus

Elder Michael Jordison chose to read a hymn for his scripture.
"My Shepherd will supply my need. Jehovah is His name;
In pastures fresh He makes me feed, beside the living stream.
He brings my wandering spirit back when I forsake His ways;
And leads me, for His mercy's sake, in paths of truth and grace.

"And when I walk through shades of death, his presence is my stay;

One word of His supporting breath drives all my fears away.
His hand, in sight of all my foes, doth still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows, His oil anoints my head.

"The sure provisions of my God attend me all my days;
Oh may His house be my abode, and all my work be praise.
There will I find reviving rest, and freely go and come.

No more a stranger, or a guest, but like a child at home.” I am going to share with you this morning a little bit about something that the Lord has been showing me that I need to work on, and perhaps you do too.

I want to ask you a question this morning. The other night around the supper table Julie asked our family, “Who from the *Book of Mormon*, if you had the opportunity, would you like to visit with? Who would you like to meet?” We went around the table, and I don’t remember if I said it at the time or not, but I wanted to meet chief captain Moroni. There are several that I would like to meet, but if I had to choose just one, it would be him. (Michael then asked carious members of the congregation for their choice and received the following names: Nephi, Ether, King Benjamin and Gideon.) There are a lot of people from the *Book of Mormon* that we could choose to meet, and I suppose that we might not want to limit to only the *Book of Mormon*. Perhaps we should include those in the *Bible*, and also the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Maybe you would like to visit with Emma Smith, or perhaps Abish. (Rob, from the audience, “The most important thing is that you have read their book first.” There was laughter, and Michael responded, “That would be a good point.”

Well, I got to thinking about that question and I began to think, ‘Michael, why wouldn’t you want to pick Jesus Christ? Would you rather wait for the day when you pass on and are standing before Him face to face, to have the chance to sit and visit with Him; to ask Him all sorts of questions that are on your mind? Or would you like to take the opportunity to visit with Him right now?’ So you might find yourselves saying like me, ‘Oh of course I meant that I’d like to meet Jesus first’, and *then* whomever it was that you might have thought of.

Sometimes we forget that Jesus *is* here for us to visit with. We forget that Jesus is more than some obscure image that our mind focuses upon while we pray. Our conversations with Him all too often tend towards either a one sided lecture or a list of requests folded and placed through the slit in the cardboard box on the table. Our *visits* with Him are more like an unloading of everything that’s happened to us that day, not really caring to hear what He might have to say in response.

But Jesus is more than a silent friend on the other end of the phone call, who patiently listens as you share your wants, needs, regrets, and concerns. Remember that Jesus, the God of the Universe, took upon Him a body of flesh – one just like yours and mine. He has a body that feels hot and cold; the rough of sandpaper and the smoothness of a nice fur coat. He could smell hot bread, fresh out of the oven, and feel a hunger for it; and know the pleasure of a nice soft bed after a hard day’s work in the wood shop.

Can you see Jesus sitting in His workshop, making a table or chair perhaps, when His neighbor comes in to talk about the storm they had the night before, or some of the recent happenings in the village? Jesus might have taken some time out of His busy day to sit and cry with a man who had lost His family – or perhaps to go and hoe in the garden of a widowed woman who had no help. Before His entry into what we might call ‘the ministry’, Jesus interacted and contributed in His community, just like we do. Do we think about the fact that we can related to Jesus as more than a king and or a lord? Do we picture him only as a savior – as one who has rescued us from some vague danger (the consequences of sin) - and therefore owe him some gratitude. Are we grateful to Him for what He has done for us, yet keep our distance from Him, not really gaining the confidence in an intimate relationship with Him?

Well, Jesus is most assuredly our Lord and King *and* Savior. But He has commanded us that we nurture a new relationship with Him. You see, Jesus wants to be your and my friend. Do you have friends; a best friend perhaps? Are you someone else’s best friend? (Not sure if I can say that I’m someone else’s best friend.) Who is it that you like to spend time with? Is it your spouse? Is it somebody you go to school with, perhaps somebody you work with? You like to spend time with them, but what about Jesus? Do you like to spend time with Him? And can you say that Jesus is your best friend? Or conversely, can you say that *you* are Jesus’ best friend?

“What makes a good friend?” (Again Elder Jordison appealed to the congregation to express understandings of the qualities that make a good friend. Their responses were: One who listens, is kind, one that you could trust, all of those qualities.) A good friend is one that listens to you – can help you with your problems. Someone who accepts you for who you are, but also encourages you to be better than you are; one that loves you. Someone you can tell your innermost thoughts and secrets to; one who is always there fore you. And I like this one – somebody that remembers you – what you like and don’t like and when your birthday is; someone that laughs with you and who shares their toys.

To have a friendship with somebody requires that we first become a friend to them. The other person doesn’t have to do anything for us to choose to be their friend. We can’t make them accept our friendship; we can only do our part to be a friend to them. A friendship requires that both parties are in agreement of the relationship. Jesus has already chosen to be our friend.

Man’s Best Friend

When I was just a little kid we lived in Warrensburg, Missouri. My friends and I used to play in the old part of downtown. There was a stature of a dog by the courthouse there. Have any of you, other than those on the front row here (the Jordison family), ever heard of a dog named Old Drum? When in second or third grade, my Dad told me the story of that dog and why there came to be a statue of Him by the courthouse, for the purpose of one of my first writing assignments in school. (I still have that paper.) As it turns out, that dog belonged to a man by the name of Charles Burden, a local farmer. Old Drum was his best hunting dog. One of his neighbors, Leonidas Hornsby, had sworn that if any dog ever came on his property, he would shoot it. Well, the funny thing is Leonidas had hunted with Old Drum and said that he was one of the best hunting dogs he had ever seen in his life. But one night, Old Drum got loose and appeared there at Leonidas’ farmstead. Leonidas had to keep his word, and he shot Old Drum dead. Killed him.

Well, as you can imagine, this was rather unsettling for Mr. Burden; so he filed a suit against his neighbor, and the case went all the way to the Missouri Supreme Court. It was there in 1870 at the Missouri Supreme Court that, then Senator George Graham Vest, who represented Mr. Burden, gave these famous final remarks to the jury. I think you’ll find them interesting as I do. They read,

“Gentlemen of the Jury: “The best friend a man has in this world may turn against him and become his enemy. His son or daughter that he has reared with loving care may prove ungrateful. Those who are nearest and dearest to us, those whom we trust with our happiness and our good name, may become traitors to their faith. The money that a man has, he may lose. It flies away from him, perhaps when he needs it the most. A man’s reputation may be sacrificed in a moment of ill-considered action. The people who are prone to fall on their knees to do us honor when success is with us may be the first to throw the stone of malice when failure settles its

cloud upon our heads. The one absolutely unselfish friend that a man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him and the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous is his dog.” “Gentleman of the Jury, a man’s dog stands by him in prosperity and in poverty, in health and in sickness. He will sleep on the cold ground, where the wintry winds blow and the snow drives fiercely, if only he may be near his master’s side. He will kiss the hand that has no food to offer, he will lick the wounds and sores that encounters the roughness of the world. He guards the sleep of his pauper master as if he were a prince. When all other friends desert, he remains. When riches take wings and reputation falls to pieces, he is as constant in his love as the sun in its journey through the heavens.”

“If fortune drives the master forth an outcast in the world, friendless and homeless, the faithful dog asks no higher privilege than that of accompanying him to guard against danger, to fight against his enemies. When the last scene of all comes, and death takes the master in its embrace and his body is laid away in the cold ground, no matter if all other friends pursue their way, there by his graveside will the noble dog be found, his head between his paws, his eyes sad but open in alert watchfulness, faithful and true even to death.”

As you might have guessed, it was from this court case that the phrase, ‘A man’s best friend is his dog’ came from. Mr. Burden won the case and received his \$50.00 compensation for the dog, which was probably quite a bit in those days.

I think that some of those attributes were exaggerated a little for the purposes of the court case, but they help to give us a clearer picture of what our friendship should be one to another and to our friend, Jesus Christ. The one “unselfish friend that a man can have in this selfish world, the one that never deserts him and the one that never proves ungrateful or treacherous is” [Jesus Christ].

I believe that the Senator’s remarks were rooted in the *Bible*. If you recall from the Book of John; Jesus speaking to His disciples said this, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” It was Jesus who laid down His life willingly for His friends. And the scripture goes on to qualify what makes a friend. Jesus continues, “Ye are My friends if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what His Lord does, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you that you go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain; and whatsoever you may ask the Father in My name, He shall give it to you.” (from John 15:13-16)

So, to be a friend of God requires that we do what He asks us to do – what He commands us to do. And in the days of the disciples they were commanded to go and to labor in the vineyard to bring souls into the Kingdom of God.

Abraham, A Friend of God

You might recall that our Father, Abraham, made a covenant with the Lord – a promise. And the promises of the Lord to Abraham were that he would have a son through his wife Sarai (whose name was changed to Sarah), that his inheritance would be all the land of Canaan, that he would become the father to a multitude of nations. Abraham’s part of the promise was that he had to keep God’s commandments – keep His sayings, walk uprightly before God, that he had to take the name Abraham (his name prior was Abram), and that he had to circumcise all of his household including his servants.. He was also to keep all the covenants which

God had made with Abraham’s fathers. It was because that Abraham kept his parts of the covenant, or his promise, he was called ‘the friend of God’.

While I was looking through the scriptures thinking about this and all that Lord was pointing out to me, I thought about Jesus’ disciples. They spent three to three and a half years with Him, getting to know Him and His ministry. I think that it was partly their friendship with Jesus that allowed them later on to move and speak in power – to fulfill the great commission which He would give them. They had an intimacy with Jesus that only friends can have. They knew how he walked and how he talked. They heard the inflection of his voice – not just what He said, but *how* He said it. They knew His mannerisms because they spent time with Him.

And things which had been obscure –things which He had said and done that they didn’t quite understand while He was walking and talking with them – suddenly became clear after His resurrection. And those understandings from that time that they were with Him were magnified. And I think it was magnified in their own ministry from that point forth in their lives and even in their deaths. The intimacy they gained living as friends of Christ reinforced a trust which blossomed into unshaken faith, and through their relationship with Christ, all past, present and future commissions were magnified, (notwithstanding the workings of the Holy Ghost.) And it is the same empowerment through this intimate relationship with Jesus Christ that was conveyed to the Elders in the early church of 1832.

In Section 83:13-16c we read, “And again I say unto you, my friends (for from henceforth I shall call you friends), it is expedient that I give unto you this commandment that ye become even as My friends in the days when I was with them, traveling to preach this gospel in My power.” Now listen to the commandment: “For I suffered them not to have purse of scrip, neither two coats; behold I send you out to prove the world, and the laborer is worthy of his hire. And any man that shall go and preach this gospel of the Kingdom and fail not to continue faithful in all things shall not be weary in mind, neither darkened, neither in body, limb or joint, and a hair of his head shall not fall to the ground unnoticed. And they shall not go hungry neither athirst.

“Therefore, take no thought for the morrow, for what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed; for consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin; and the kingdoms of the world, in all their glory, are not arrayed like one of these; for your Father who art in heaven, knoweth that you have need of all these things. Therefore, let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. Neither take ye thought beforehand what ye shall say, but treasure up in your minds continually the words of life, and it shall be given you in the very hour that portion that shall be meted unto every man. Therefore, let no man among you (for this commandment is unto all the faithful who are called of God in the church, unto the ministry) from this hour, take purse or scrip, that goeth forth to proclaim this gospel of the kingdom. Behold, I send you out to reprove the world of all their unrighteous deeds, and to teach them of a judgment which is to come. And whoso receiveth you, there will I be also; for I will go before your face: I will be o your right hand and on your left, and My Spirit shall be in your hearts, and My angels round about you, to bear you up.

Whoso receiveth you receiveth me, and the same will feed you, and clothe you, or gives you money, shall in no wise lose his reward: and he that doeth not these things is not My disciple by this you may

know My disciplesÖ”

A prerequisite of the church fulfilling the great commission back in 1832 was that the Priesthood become the ‘friends of God’. And it is true for us today. An intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is paramount to receiving an endowment of His Spirit which is what allows those of the ministry to adhere to all that is listed in above scripture. Jesus has already chosen to be our friend. He has proved His friendship by dying in our place. Will we chose to be His friend – to do whatsoever He commands us and asks us to do? I struggle with doing what he asks me to do – to fulfill me role and obligation in my family, my church – my workplace. Everything in my life of the world seems to be pulling me away from keeping God’s commandments. As was mentioned in the earlier Adult class this morning, our culture is geared toward consumerism. We will have to remove ourselves from this part of the culture in order to become financially secure. It is the same with keeping the commandments of God. We have to remove ourselves from the part of our culture with pulls us away from being obedient – in order to become spiritually “secure”.

I need to say, “I want to be a friend of God more than just one who relies on Him to be my Savior. I want to begin more fully doing the things that I know He has asked me to do.” But where do I begin? How can I break the cycle of disobedience? And how can I get through this door of change?

Prayer the Key

I feel like the Lord has shared a very simple answer with me. Prayer. Prayer. Now probably, everyone has heard or seen the UPS shipping company slogan, “What can Brown do for you?” So often my prayers have only been like responses to the phrase “What can God do for you Michael?” ‘Well here, God, here’s my list. You can do this for me and you can do this for my friend, and this for my family, and do this for so and so down the street and for such and such that was mentioned at prayer meeting last Wednesday.” Do you have prayers like that too? Our prayers need to be a bit more that just that.

John F. Kennedy said this famous line in his inaugural address, “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country” Our prayers need to incorporate more of this attitude in them along with our petitions. “What can I do for you God?” Remember that prayer is communication between friends. Think about that for a minute. Prayer is a communication between friends. When we talk to God, we are talking to our friend – or should be. And if we are friends, our prayers should be two-way conversations. Now, I’ve found this to be true. When we pray in the spirit, which I don’t always do, the Lord gives us the things which we need to pray for. And the Lord also gives us revelation. Sometimes we think that revelation is merely something that is binding on the church, but revelation is also light and understanding about the nature of Jesus and His work for us. God gives us that which we need – the direction that helps us to fulfill His commandments. And when we’re stuck in a rut (where I find myself many times) our prayers have become less than a conversation *with* God and more like the whining of a child. I can say that because I whine more than my share unfortunately. We can’t have an empowered relationship with Jesus if we are not praying in earnest and sincerity, just like we can’t have a good relationship with our friend if we never visit them, talk with them or *listen* to them.

God wants us to be His friends. Do we want to be His friend? Can we be one that never deserts him? One who stands beside Him in our prosperity or in our poverty – when we are healthy or when we are

sick? And will we sleep on the cold ground wherever He bids us to lay our head that we may be near Him or His sheep? Will we thank Him when our storehouses are empty? Will we defend His honor when thieves break in and steal it under their breath? And when we have nothing left and are scorned by the world, will we remain there at the foot of the cross, ever watchful, faithful and true unto death?

Perhaps it’s time that man has a ‘new’ best friend. For “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.”

By What Path Do We Walk?

Priest Kent Clisby opened his sermon reading Doctrine and Covenants 2:1. “The works and the designs and the purposes of God, cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught, for God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth He turn to the right hand nor to the left; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; therefore, his paths are straight and his course is one eternal round.”

Michael Jordison sang a prayer of concern for the ability to walk the way of the Lord, which he said he “stole” from his sister. The stanzas declare:

“I really thank you Lord, You’ve been so good to me. You gave me eyes to see. Set my spirit free. Forgive me, Lord. Sometimes I just can’t settle down, and I start losing ground. I feel like leaving town.

“I feel so foolish, Lord, and I forget my sin. I complain for lack of wealth. I’m just thinkin’ ‘bout myself. I want to do what You want me to, but I get in my way. I don’t know what to say, but I need You more each day.

“There’s so much to do. The time’s so short. Don’t know where to start. Lord, You know my heart. I want to do my part.

And so the refrain pleads:

“Send me an angel, Lord, someone to understand, a gentle guiding hand to help me on my way. Send me an angel, Lord, someone to lift me up, encourage me just enough to help me on my way.”

Brother Clisby announced, my theme is , “By What Path Do We Walk?” I am going to read section 2:1 again. “The works and the designs and the purposes of God, cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught, for God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth He turn to the right nor to the left; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; therefore, his paths are straight and his course is one eternal round.”

Kent spoke of the feelings he experiences as he approaches a sermon - the same that he feels when preparing for a wrestling match - pent up anxiety until he reaches the mat, and then all is well. This morning was not much help, he explained. There was a little frustration as to who was to actually talk. Both he and Ed Anderson came prepared to speak, “Which was Okay. Ed was ready, and I was willing to have Ed do it!” Kent confessed.

Family and The Path Kent Has Walked

I want to talk about by what path we walk, and the best way II can do it is talk about myself. I was brought up in this church. When I was a little kid, we walked to church. It was only four blocks away, and we walked as a family. I have been thinking about being as a

family these last several days. Well, it's kind of nice! Having part of my family back is good - not that we walk to church, but you know it is still kind of nice.

As I grew up, school was close. I lived in the city and everything seemed to be convenient. We walked to school. Church was four blocks away. School was four blocks away. My recollection of the first day of school for me - kindergarten - kind of like right now - scared to death! All I remember was that I hid underneath the teacher's desk for almost the whole day. What a place to hide, you know! And that's about it. After that everything was cool. I got to know some of the kids, and, you know, you go along. You don't have anything else that you know about. You are a little kid starting to grow up. You are starting to learn the path - half the church - half the school.

You get a little older. Gosh! This is the wrong crowd!

I was a little person. You went with the parents everywhere. Summertime we always took off. We always went to camps. We always ended up at Reunion. Always! Some of my best times - things I can remember best happened at camps and reunions. We had a place called Silver Lake. That was an older campground for Washington. We all had little cabins. Everybody had their own little cabin and we had a little board walk in front of the cabin. I remember stopping on the way to Reunion picking up a 25 or 50 pound block of ice to put in the cooler. I don't know why I remember that, but that was kind of fun! It was family there, and you were still taught how to walk the path out at the camp ground, still at church.

One of the incidents I remember at that particular camp ground was when I was five or six years old and I ran along the board walks. Well, you don't do that in bare feet very well. And you know little kids, they like to stop suddenly - step on the brakes kind of thing. I did that, and I ended up with a good sized sliver in my foot. You know, little boys have a tendency to do those kind of things anyway. Having that pulled out was exciting - not that you want to do it all the time, but, you know!

Other than going to Reunions when I was smaller, our family excursions were to Yakima. I had a lot of relatives over there, and most of my relatives that I visited were church members, so there was always some kind of an activity with church.

We used to go out rafting down the Yakima River. I was still eight or ten years old and not what I would call a swimmer. More of a sinker. We would all take our big inner tubes up river on the other side of the bridge, and we piled in - you know, two or three jump in the inner tube and just go down the rapids and we would end up back down in this little cove where everybody gathered. It was like a little park. We would park there. My father was a good swimmer, and I can remember his voice always saying, "Be careful where you are. Be careful what you are doing." I was having fun, because as a little person, you get just far enough out into the river and you can kind of go whish and float down the river without the inner tube. It was kind of fun except that sometimes you didn't touch bottom and then it was scary. It happened to me, and somehow there reached out a big old arm and just pulled me out of the river, and I got a yelling from my father. And because of that little story, my father told me how he was taught to swim. My grandfather taught him how to swim by throwing him in, and you either sank or you swam! My dad said he just kept going down further and further and my grandfather took one step out into the creek and pulled him out. It was a kind of interesting story. My Dad turned out to be a good swimmer.

From visits with the family in Yakima, I recall during the

summers spending a week over there staying with different relatives. That's how I learned how to milk cows. My Uncle Ben would get us up in the morning by, "Hey! Everybody up. It's porcupine hunting." Porcupine hunting? So we were out of bed, but there was never any hunting of any sort. He just wanted us to get up and start doing chores; but it was fun. We enjoyed it.

I guess I am remembering these things because I missed doing them with my kids. You guys are my family. I can't seem to get my kids too involved even with this, but it is such a nice feeling to be able to speak - to talk to your family. (I'm starting to calm down!)

Choosing the Path Jesus Walked

After I was growing up and got into Junior High, I was more involved with the church. I got baptized. I remember different things. When I was baptized, I remember the Rainier Valley congregation and the concrete font that we had down in the basement. One of the reasons I can remember for being baptized is because I never got to have the emblems served to me prior to my baptism. So I sometimes wonder if I was baptized for the right reason. Once baptized, you know you did it once. I guess that's good because of the church and how it has brought me along.

When I got into High School there were some 700 kids in my class. The High School was Sophomore, Junior Senior, so there were about 2200 kids in the school, and most of the time you found me by myself or with one other student, who was the only other RLDS kid in the school. Other than that, I had a safety net there because my mother worked in the kitchen. Sometimes you wonder about such a safety feature because the teachers all reported to my mom before I even got home, so it wasn't much help.

But I got involved with Zion's League. It was very big back then. We had twelve or thirteen congregations in our Stake. We did a lot of traveling. We made up our own program and went around from congregation to congregation. During that time, my cousins over in the Yakima area built up a group called JC & Company - a singing group that traveled around, and that was great. Some of those kids traveled hundreds of miles just to go to the rehearsals, let alone doing their concerts. So we were very active. Again I was in camps during my High School time. In my Junior year I got involved with several camps. I started helping with camps instead of being just a camper. You learn something different from every camp. It is just such a pleasure to think about it now. Why can't I do it now? Some of us still can.

Just prior to the time I finished High School, I met a young man - I think his name was Ergman. He was out there at a retreat. They spent the summer out in Washington. His son was a part of a group, and I got talked into going to Older Youth Service Corps. So after I graduated High School, I went into that corps. I came out to Graceland for training - my first big trip away from home. That's kind of memorable because I came out here with six different young ladies in my Dad's van that he gave me for the summer to do this for the church. I was so excited about being able to come out and do some work for the church.

When we got out here, we did our two weeks inservice at Graceland then took off to our own areas. I went to St. Louis and spent the summer there. I really enjoyed that time, and at Homecoming, this last Homecoming, I met one of the directors of the camps down there. He was at Homecoming with his Dad. It was Paul DeBarthe. He was one of the directors down at the camp ground, and I just kind of recognized him a little bit, and then he remembered who I was. We talked for a little bit and then had to go our separate ways, but that was kind of fun. I enjoyed that. We have

To Be Born Again, A Kingdom Essential

such a tie with people that you meet throughout the church whether it's the Reorganized Church, the Restoration church or the COC church. You still have connections all over, and everybody is trying to follow their path. It's kind of amazing how people can grow and continue on. I haven't finished growing. Some parts of me would like to quit growing. The faith in myself and the Spirit I would love to have grow further.

After the summer with the Older Youth Service Corps, somehow, I ended up staying at Graceland and spent five years there. It was in 1980 that I got my Patriarchal blessing, another step in the path of growing and continuing on. (I pulled my Patriarchal Blessing out this morning and kind of read through it again).

Then in 1982 I was ordained to a Priest. I feel like I am a very blessed person. I have four wonderful children that have come from the marriage that I had, and they are doing, on the most part, very good. My youngest son called the other night after prayer service - I think it was, or Thursday. It was the first time he has been able to call from boot camp down in Fort Benning, and he was telling how it was going. He actually sounded like he was enjoying it, so I feel better about that part. The two older ones are fighting it out there at Graceland trying to survive their semester. It seems to be kind of tough this time around. And the youngest one is still in Junior High. We have so many blessings that have come forth from our families - from our family of church. We think sometimes too little of what has happened or what can happen. I watched a little news this morning, and it bothered me a lot because there was another slaying here in the state of Iowa - another family - whole family - three daughters and the parents were murdered. It's going on through out the United States. I don't understand all these things. Nobody is taking a stand, it sounds like. What is happening is everybody following. We have to stay on the straight and narrow - follow our Lord, Jesus Christ and keep the faith.

One of the notes I wrote down here is, "If I didn't have church or a church family, I wonder where I would be or what I would be doing - or any of us, you know. Maybe we would progress someplace else, you know, but it seems like we get stunted in our growth when we are outside the church. You have to have a basis to grow on, and our base is belief in Jesus Christ and these three books - these three scriptures.

In the Second book of Nephi, chapter 15, verse 10, (We are going to finish with this): "But behold, for none of these can I hope, except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate, and walk in the straight path, which leads to life, and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation."

Sherman Phipps, in charge of the service, commented, "As our brother Kent has pointed out to us, there is a path that has been set before us by our Lord and Savior. In as much as we walk in that path, life is good and there are many blessings. But when we drift from that path, as it seems so many in the world have done and are doing, there is a lot of darkness. Life is not nearly so enjoyable. It's incumbent upon us, as our brother Kent has pointed out this morning, to be sure that we know in what path we are walking and that we give our best effort and remain in that straight and narrow path that Christ has walked for us and stands ready to support us in. Inasmuch as we do that, the promises are sure, and the Lord never varies from His promises."

Elder Alan Smith read John 3:1-7: "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

I hope I have something this morning that will be interesting to you, Brother Smith announced as he greeted the Mt. Ayr Saints Sunday, October 22, 2006. It has excited me. Sometimes it is hard to put into words what you want to say to communicate to others what you think you know or that you think you have been led to understand, but I hope that happens this morning.

Last Sunday I was getting ready for church and for some reason, the TV in the bedroom happened to be on. Someone was getting ready to give a sermon, and they flashed up the words of the scripture that I just read from John for you this morning about the fact that unless you are born again, you can't see the Kingdom of God - unless you are baptized by the water and the Spirit, you can't enter the Kingdom of God. We have talked about that before. Ron has talked about the fact that the kingdom is tied up in Jesus' ministry. Here He is telling us how to enter and how to see it. We talk about the Kingdom a lot, but how does the Kingdom become a part of our lives? Here we have Jesus teaching Nicodemus this concept in these words.

The fellow who was speaking said that there was a great minister who was a great orator back in England in the 1700's or early 1800's who was such a speaker that, instead of saying the minister was like the greatest Shakespearean actor of the time, people said that the greatest Shakespearean actor could do what the minister did in terms of being able to orate and to speak. He said that this minister used this text about being born again in 400 different sermons. So there must be a lot to be said here, and I hope I am not talking to you about things you already know. There must be much to mine in these words for a number of sermons.

Why Must We Be Born Again?

But I would like to talk this morning about the Kingdom of God and why it is that we can't see it unless we are born again; and why it is that we need to follow the steps of being baptized of the water and the Spirit to be able to enter into it.

Let's go back a little bit to this story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus, and we will read a little more about it. Nicodemus was one of the Pharisees - one of the rulers of the Jews, it says. He came to Jesus by night. He could have come to Jesus in the temple, probably, or out in front of everybody during the day, but he came by night, it says, to talk with Jesus, "We know you are a teacher come from God because of the miracles that You do. Those couldn't happen

otherwise.” And Jesus’ response to Nicodemus’ statement was to tell him that unless he was born again he couldn’t see the Kingdom of God. So Nicodemus took Him literally and said, “What do you mean? Do I have to go back into my mother’s womb? As an old man, I don’t understand how that could happen. That’s when Jesus said, “Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not when I tell you you have to be born again.”

Nicodemus still couldn’t quite understand. He responded to Jesus, “How can these things be?” And Jesus said, “You are a Pharisee and you don’t know - you don’t understand?” I am sure that embarrassed Nicodemus a little bit. Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, we speak what we know and we testify what we have seen, but you don’t receive our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?”

Jesus was telling Nicodemus that when he talked in terms of physical things, if he couldn’t understand, how was he going to understand when Jesus talked to him about Spiritual things? Then Jesus tells us the words that are familiar to anyone who watches a foot ball game on Sunday. At least you see the reference John 3:16. Here’s what the scripture says beginning in verse 13: “I tell you, No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; That whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.

“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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He who believeth on him is not condemned; but he who believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the Only Begotten Son of God, which before was preached by the mouth of the holy prophets; for they testified of me.”

So Jesus tells Nicodemus those words that we have heard before about what His mission was, why He was here, why He had come into the world, and that, YES, as Nicodemus had asked Him in the first place, He was sent from God. Jesus was saying, “I was sent from God in a unique way. I am God’s Son! I came out of the love of My Father to bring everlasting life to all those who would respond.” And then Jesus goes on and says, talking about those who don’t believe, John 3:19 - “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one who doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” So Jesus is saying, “The condemnation is not something that I am putting on you. The condemnation is that, here is the light that you could have and yet, you would rather have darkness. You do those things in your life for which you are afraid you will be reproved.”

Do you know what reproof means? It means that what you did will come out and you will be told that what you did was wrong . People will know what you have done. Those who can’t see - who don’t have the light - who can’t see the Kingdom, don’t want to see because it shines light on their lives. “But he who loveth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest.” (John 3:21-22.). Those who see the Kingdom, aren’t afraid of the light, aren’t afraid that their deeds will be shown because they understand that it is only as they come, repent and ask forgiveness that they can

be a part of that Kingdom. “And he who obeyeth the truth, the works which he doeth they are of God,” the scripture goes on to say.

So here is Nicodemus coming wanting to know - Nicodemus who later on will be the only voice of reason at Jesus’ trial to say, “We can’t just condemn Him until we have had a trial,” and later on the one who provides the tomb for Jesus, to him Jesus is saying, as we know, “I come here to give you everlasting life. I come here that you can live in kingdom relationships in your lives - that you can have the righteousness, peace and joy of the Holy Spirit,” which is the Kingdom, as Paul defines it.

What Does Repentance Have To Do With Rebirth?

Why do we have to repent of our sins, to be able to see the Kingdom? -to actually know the Kingdom? It is because we understand Christ. Until we understand that we need to repent, our minds and our hearts can be darkened. There are different levels of darkness. Have you ever been in a cave when they turn off all of the lights and say, “Now this is what darkness is really all about!” You can’t see anything. You can put your hand up in front of your face and see nothing. There are levels of darkness. I was helping Nathan move a couple of weeks ago and the piano got loose in the back of the van we were in, and so I hopped up in the back of the van to hold the piano while we went the rest of the way. They put the big van door back down and the only light was where somebody had run into the van and knocked a thin little hole in the corner. That was the only light with which to see as we drove the rest of the way. That was pretty dark. The other day, I was working at Printcraft when all of the lights went off, and our power lights didn’t come on. I was in the back room and there was a little tiny crack of light that came in through one door so I could see what I was doing.

In those situations of darkness, there can be things right before your eyes, there can be things right beside you, there can be things right in front of you that you cannot see! Jesus was saying that until we understand and recognize Him and His Kingdom, we don’t even know that it is there, even if it’s right beside us, because we are not seeing. We are not understanding.

What is it that blinds us to the Kingdom? What is it that blinds us to the light? The scriptures tell us that there are several different things that can blind us. Satan is one. Genesis 3:5 tells us, “Yea, even the devil, the father of all lies deceives and blinds men and leads them captive to his will, even as many as will not hearken to My voice.” So we can be led away by Satan’s purposes - by his lies - his deceptions that blind us. Jesus, quoting Isaiah in John 12:40 says, “Satan had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and be converted that I should heal them.”

Or in first Nephi, 3:125 we have the story of Lehi’s vision where we are told that, “the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blinds the eyes and hardens the hearts of the children of men and leads them into broad roads that they may perish, and be lost ... ” So it can be by satan, his temptations and other things he does in our lives that help us become blind.

The scriptures also tell us that it can be the craftiness of men that can blind us and lead us away. In Doctrine and Covenants 76:6d it tells us there are people who are the honorable men of the earth who are blinded by the craftiness of men. Our own vanity and greed can become a source of our blindness.

Second Nephi 6:58-66 tells us, “Oh, the vainness, frailties and the foolishness of men. When they are learned, they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside supposing they know of themselves.” (We have fallen into the

trap of learning that will blind us because we put aside the counsel of God thinking that we know for ourselves.) “Wherefore their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not, and they shall perish. But to be learned is good if you hearken unto the counsels of God.” (So our learning can be something that blinds us if we don’t listen to the counsels of God as a part of that learning.) “Wo unto the rich who are rich after things of the world, for because they are rich, they despise the poor and persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures: wherefore their treasure is their God. Behold their treasure will perish with them also.” The physical things that we have can blind us to the Kingdom if we are not careful. It says, “Wo unto the blind that will not see: for they shall perish also.”

Ephesians 4:17-19 says, “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart, who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness and greediness.” In our own vanity, we put our own selves first. We become past feeling for anyone else - past feeling for God; and because of that we give ourselves over to greediness and all kinds of uncleanness as we become blinded to the light.

We can even be blinded to the kingdom and to God when we think we are doing the right thing - when we think we are following the law. When Jesus came to the Scribes and Pharisees, He said to them, (Matthew 23:21-25), “Ye blind guides, who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel!” (You are worried about the little things while the big things get though.) “Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.” (You wash the outside so that to everyone else it will look like you are using a clean cup and platter, but what you are drinking is yuk!) “You blind Pharisees and hypocrites, you are like unto whited sepulchres which outwardly appear beautiful, but” (Whitewashed over the outside of things) “inside are full of bones of the dead and all uncleanness. Even so, ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.” We can blind ourselves if we look so hard at following the rules that we don’t understand why we are supposed to be doing the things the rules require, like the Pharisees had become, or like the young man that came to Jesus and said, “I have kept all the commandments.” And Jesus said, “Okay. Great. Give everything that you have to the poor and come and follow me.” The young man went away sorrowfully. We can be blinded to the Kingdom even when we think we are keeping the commandments if we are not careful. We can become blinded if we don’t recognize that the goal of the commandment is to have us live together in the kingdom.

Many Choose To Be Blind

What a lot of us in the world want is to find someone who will tell us that we don’t have to repent. That was the same case back in Nephi’s time, Helaman 5:37-40. “But behold, if a man shall come among you and say, Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that, and you shall not suffer; he will say, Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes and do whatsoever your heart desireth; and if a man shall come among you and say this, you will receive him and you will say that he is a prophet. Yea, ye will lift him up and you will give unto him of your substance. You will give unto him of your gold and of your silver, and you will clothe him with costly apparel; and because he speaketh flattering

words unto you and he saith that all is well, then you do not find fault with him. O, ye wicked and perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiff-necked people, how long will you suppose that the Lord will suffer you. Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides. Yea, how long will you choose darkness rather than light?”

Even those who have seen miracles - even those who have shared in wonderful experiences, can become blinded because they forget - because they turn away. Remember the story in the third book of Nephi about some of the people who had shared in the signs of Jesus’ birth when there was going to be a day and a night and a day when it was going to be light? They were going to kill the people who believed that because they thought the time had passed. Then this event happened and there are other signs and wonders happening among the people, but within thirty years, between Jesus’ birth and Jesus’ death, even though they were given this sign that Jesus would come, here is what happened. (3 Nephi 1:38-40). “And it came to pass, people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less astonished at a sign and wonder all together from heaven.” (Kind of like riches. You get enough things and you begin to not be so impressed.) “in so much that they began to harden their hearts, be blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all that they had heard and seen, imagining up some vain thing in their hearts, that it was brought by men, and by the power of the devil, to lead away and deceive the hearts of the people. And thus did Satan get possession of the hearts of the people again, insomuch that he did blind their eyes, and lead them away to believe that the doctrine of Christ was a foolish and a vain thing.”

We need to repent. It is only as we repent and are baptized that we begin to see the plan that God has for our lives - the call for us to be a part of his Kingdom. This was taught from the very beginning, the scriptures tell us. Back with Genesis 6:57-59, “And the Lord spake unto Adam saying, Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, even so, when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter that they may know to prize the good. And it is given unto them to know good from evil, wherefore they are agents unto themselves. And I have given unto you another law and commandment; wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God.” Once we repent and covenant to follow Christ, we have seen the Kingdom. As we are baptized of the water and of the Holy Spirit, with the gift of the Holy Spirit we can enter into the Kingdom. The Holy Ghost leads us to righteousness, peace and joy, which, the scriptures tell us, is the Kingdom.

The Holy Spirit Guides Us Into The Kingdom

Moroni 7:14 tells us that the Spirit of Christ is given to every man that we may know good from evil. “Wherefore I show unto you the way to judge; for everything which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ;...” Once we have that gift of the Holy Spirit, are baptized into new life and are born again of the Holy Spirit, then we have this Spirit that can lead us to know good from evil, which helps us to find righteousness. For as Jesus told the Brother of Jared in Ether, 1:105-106: “But he that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit; and he shall know and bear record. For because of my Spirit, he shall know that these things are true for it persuadeth men to do good; and whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good, is of me; for good cometh of none, save it be of me.”

Alma 10:27-28 talks about our casting off our sins and not procrastinating the day of our repentance. “But that ye will humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on His name, and watch and pray continually that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long suffering; having faith on the Lord.”

In First Corinthians, 2:9-11, Paul says, “ But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, except he has the Spirit of God.” As we have that Spirit of God He can lead us to that righteousness - that relationship with God and with other people, that is part of the Kingdom.

The Holy Ghost leads us to peace as well, which is freedom from fear. We are truly at peace when we are not afraid. Mosiah 3:8-11 tells us, “ For behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him, and have become his sons and his daughters. And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given, whereby salvation cometh, therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God, that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

The Holy Ghost leads us to joy - another part of the Kingdom. It tells us in Mosiah, in King Benjamin’s sermon, (Mosiah 2:32-35) “For behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him, and have become his sons and his daughters. For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same being, even God, for all the substance which we have; for both food, and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind? And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped, that ye could not find utterance, so exceeding great was your joy.”

Have you had that experience that you just couldn’t talk because you were so overcome with joy in His Spirit? That’s part of the thing that we need to have more and more if we are going to be a part of His Kingdom always and have that experience in our lives.

Come And See

I would like to close with just one other story from the scriptures because I think it may say in the shortest number of words the invitation that we need to respond to and to offer to others about coming to Christ and finding His Kingdom and knowing that that kingdom comes to us as we are born again. This is the story of Philip and Nathanael found in John 1:45-46. Philip had seen Christ and he ran to find Nathanael. “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph!” Was Nathanael really excited about this? Could he see the same thing that Philip wanted to share with him? Hardly. Nathanael said, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? And Philip said unto him” (three words), “Come and see.”

I looked up the words in the concordance. The word translated as “enter” is the same word as “come” with the addition of “eich”, which is “in.” It’s the same word that was used back in our first scripture where Jesus said, “Enter”. Come and enter are the same words with the “in” added to it.

So Philip was giving the same invitation that Jesus gave in more words to Nicodemus. See the Kingdom. Come into (or enter) the Kingdom. Come and see!

(John 1:47-51). So Nathanael came and “Jesus said of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” That was Christ’s greeting to Nathanael as he came, and “Nathanael said unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answering said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.” Now when Jesus said, “Before we met, I saw you standing under a fig tree, Nathanael knew that he had been standing under the fig tree but also knew that Jesus could not have seen him there physically. So “Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these.”

Nathanael had a glimpse of Jesus’ power and what it would be to be a part of the Kingdom just in those few words when Jesus said, “I saw you earlier and recognize you.” And Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” He was saying, “Nathanael, you have just seen a glimpse of the Kingdom I want you to be a part of. Come and see!”

That’s the invitation for us this morning as we come to His Kingdom that His Spirit will guide us to where we have, not just the things that we have today in terms of our relationships with each other and with our Heavenly Father, in terms of peace and righteousness and joy, but we will have that to a much greater degree. And He tells us to share those words with others. “See. Repent and let the light come int your eyes and heart so you can recognize the kingdom. Be baptized of the water and the Spirit so that with the guidance of the spirit you can be enter in and shrare in the kingdom relationships every day. Be a part of what I have prepared for you, and look at the blessings which are in store!” I hope this morning that there had been something that Jesus has said that I have tried to share with you has spoken to you and called you to come in to His Kingdom.

Can You Still Sing the Song of Redeeming Love?

After thanking Jan Jordison for a beautiful prelude for the music service of October 29, Elder Alan Smith read the call to worship, Alma 3:46. “And now I say unto you, my brethren, If you have experienced a change of heart, and if you have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, Can you feel so now?” Brother Smith commented, “We hope this morning that you will be able to sing the song of redeeming love and feel that change in your heart that music can bring. We are going to be reminding us, as we go through some of the words of the hymns that we sing, of how important music can be in reminding us of things that have happened in our lives; just like, if you have felt like you have wanted

to sing the song of redeeming love before, maybe you would like to do that again this morning as we share in the Spirit of the Lord. He then introduced “a song of redeeming love”, and we sang “All Hail The Power of Jesus’ Name” to the tune that has the magnificent passage, “Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him Lord of All!” sung by men’s and women’s voices in powerful harmony. Gordon Winkler offered the invocation. Jan accompanied the receiving of the offering by Jon Ammon Smith and Jared Beck.

Cede Smith played the piano piece, “All the Stars are Shining.” Ron and Di sang the familiar “Because He Lives”. The song begins by telling of Jesus’ coming, living and dying to buy our pardon and of the empty grave that proves our Savior lives. It speaks of the assurance a newborn baby has that the future is secure because of Him, and of our final experience of seeing Him and knowing that He reigns. Di and Ron added a stanza not usually heard. “And one day soon, He’ll come to Zion. With Enoch’s City He’ll return. There’ll be no pain and no more crying. Then righteousness and peace and joy the world will learn.” The refrain that is repeated after each stanza carries with it the basic message of the song. “Because He Lives, I Can Face Tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know He holds the future, And life is worth the living just because He lives.”

Lynda Rolfe sang the well known and beloved “Old Rugged Cross.” The song describes the events that occurred on that Old Rugged Cross that stood on a hill far away, the emblem of suffering and shame, and expresses the love and confidence it engenders in those who know of the sacrifice Jesus made, leaving his home in glory to bear it for us. On it the dearest and best who has ever lived was slain for a world of lost sinners like us. It vows that the persons singing the song will cherish and cling to that Old Rugged Cross until we lay down our trophies in death when we will exchange it for our reward. It acknowledges that the world despises that cross but declares it has a wondrous attraction for us who realize that He did it “to pardon and sanctify me.” The singer finally vows, “To the Old Rugged Cross, I will ever be true. It’s shame and reproach gladly bear. Then He’ll call me someday to my home far away, where His glory forever I’ll share.”

Brother Smith called our attention to the words of the next hymn we were to sing, “Sometimes a Light Surprises”. “We are going to sing a hymn that may not be as familiar as some hymns we sing. This is a song that talks about what music can do for us. I would just like to read some of the words to you. “Sometimes a light surprises all Christians while they sing. It is the Lord who rises with healing in His wings. When comforts are declining, He grants the soul again a season of clear shining to cheer it after rain.”

Alan continued, “You know the music that we sing or whistle of hum as we go along in our lives can do all kinds of things for us. Have you ever been lonely - felt all alone and then sang a song or hummed a tune or heard a song that made you so you didn’t feel quite so lonely - a song that brought back memories of being with others or of some happy event? Have you ever been afraid? You have heard of whistling in the dark. Are there times in your life when you felt that you needed to come back into the Lord’s presence and were able to have a song help you do that? Or are there times when, “Joy to the World!” you are just so joyous that you have to sing or hum or whistle to yourself because that seems to be one way to express the emotion that is going on in your life.

You know, I heard about a congregation that any hymn that they sang at someone’s funeral, they would never use again because it might bring back memories of that person or that funeral.

To me, bringing back those memories would be a positive thing. I remember being told those people had so many people die in that congregation that they didn’t have very many hymns left that they could sing. We sang, “All Things Bright and Beautiful” at my Aunt Fiona’s funeral. I think of her every time I sing that song, but that doesn’t make it so I don’t want to sing it again. It just brings back a memory of someone who has been a part of our lives that we remember as we sing the song.

We sang “Sometimes a Light Surprises” a song that expresses our conviction that whether our circumstances are favorable or discouraging, we can be assured of the Lord’s presence and action in our lives.

Josphat Langat, a Graceland student from Kenya, East Africa, sang in Kiswahili, a more general African language that he thought Lauren Smith who had lived in Kenya, might understand. Later he translated the song into English for our understanding. He spoke first bearing his testimony saying, “God is so good to me. He has been so grateful in my life. He has shown me so many things I had not seen before.” He told of getting acquainted with his professor, Di Smith, and her husband Ron. “They told me about this church, and I have been so happy being with you.” he said. Then he explained: The songs talk about the love of God - the love and the good things that God has done unto my life of which I think I have something to sing.” (Translated, the message is: “In the morning, evening, and night, God is good all the time. Depend on Jesus. Sing to Him. Ask Jesus in all difficult times. He saved my life many times.” Refrain: “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus loves you; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus loves you. Leave your life to Jesus always.”) He ended by saying, “Thank you so much! I love that song. So many times I just feel the song taking me to heights!” Josphat also sang a few bars of a song in Luo, the language of his native tribe, explaining that song also talks about the good things that God is doing. Our presider commented that he wondered how many of us would be willing to sing in a land where the language was not our first language.

Arthur Oakman’s Testimony

Alan sang the next song after explaining, “I would like to share Arthur Oakman’s testimony about the song. “Begone Unbelief”. If you listen to the testimony, he remembers, every time he hears that song, the kiss of an angel on his cheek. Wouldn’t that be a good experience to have tied to a song?” He then read Apostle Arthur Oakman’s own words as they are recorded in Mildred Smith’s *The Master’s Touch 2*. It tells of the extreme poverty in which the Oakman family lived in England before there were government agencies to assist the poor. As a child, Arthur could not understand why they should suffer so when they were a part of Christ’s true church. His father assured him that he would rather be poor and have his faith than be rich without it. But he also promised that the day would come when the Lord would bless them “in basket and store” so they would want no more.

Arthur, his sister and his mother would stand by the gate in front of their house waiting for his father to come home from work. They could tell whether he had a good day by the way he walked. If there was money in his pocket, he would swing his left leg in a certain manner. If his leg did not swing, they would be resigned to eat what they had, if there was anything to eat in the house.

This night, as they waited, a man in a black coat and hat came around the corner singing. “Begone unbelief, your Savior is near, and for your relief will surely appear. By prayer let me wrestle, and he will perform. With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.” He went straight to the Oakman gate still singing of the blessings the



At the music service, top row, from left: Josphat Langat and Laruen Smith participate. Second row, from left: Ron and Di Smith and Sue Beck share their music selections.

Lord had in store. At the gate he asked Arthur's mother whether she had a crust of bread she could share with an old man. She had 2 slices of bread and hurried into the house to wrap one in paper and bring it out to him. It was then that he told her that because of her sacrifice in sharing what she had, the Lord had moved His hand that day to provide for the family "so you will never want in basket or in store". Then he kissed Arthur and his sister and said of Arthur, "This little lad will grow to manhood and will preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in many lands", and he foretold some things that would happen in his sister's life. Sister Oakman hastily asked the man to wait while

she went into the house to get a penny for him to buy a cup of tea to go with his bread. She had 2 pennies. When she returned the man was gone.

Arthur's father came around the corner swinging his leg. Once in the house, he swung his wife around joyously and announced he had landed a large contract that day, and they would never be in need again!

Three stanzas of the song the angel sang are in The Hymnal published in 1956 while Brother Oakman was on the committee. The fourth stanza the angel sang was an assurance that all things, no

matter how unpleasant, can work to our good.

You Found Me. What Now?

Michael Jordison announced that the song he was about to sing was one that he sang at the Seventy's reunion a couple of years ago. "It is a song I have really enjoyed. It talks about seeing Jesus in your circumstances and in other people. It says, I saw the face of Jesus In a little orphan girl. She was standing in the corner On the other side of the world. And I heard the voice of Jesus Gently whisper to my heart, Didn't you say you wanted to find Me? Well, here I am. Here you are.

[Chorus:]

So what now? What will you do now you've found Me? What now? What will you do with this treasure you've found? I know I may not look like what you expected, But if you'll remember This is right where I said I would be. You found Me. What now?

And I saw the face of Jesus Down on Sixteenth Avenue. He was sleeping in an old car While his mom went looking for food. And I heard the voice of Jesus Gently whisper to my soul, Didn't you say you wanted to know me? Well, here I am, And it's getting cold. You found me, so come and know. Come and know. Know me now. Come and know. Know me now. Come and know. Know me now. What will you do now that you found me? What now?"

"Great Is Thy Faithfulness" was our next hymn. Lauren Smith played an arrangement of "The Old Old Path". Sue Beck sang the challenging hymn, "If Suddenly Upon the Street my gracious Savior I would meet, and He should say, "As I love you thee, what love hast thou to offer Me?" Then what could this poor heart of mine, dare offer to that heart divine? His eye would pierce my outward show. His thoughts my inmost thoughts would know. And if I said, "I love Thee Lord", He would not heed my spoken word unless my daily life would show that verily I loved Him well! If on that day or in the place wherein He met me face to face, my life could show some kindness done, some purpose formed, some work begun for His dear sake, then were it meet love's gift to lay at Jesus' feet."

Robert Rolfe, after apologizing to Lynda for getting her started in the wrong key when she sang "The Old Rugged Cross", spoke of Alan's comment of how songs relate to memories. "I do. I have many songs that relate to many memories because we sat around the piano as a family and sang. Because of that there are just certain songs that just bring back those memories. If I could share one. You have met Joseph Smith from the Church of Christ who spoke here. He told me about a story in his family. You may not be aware that a lot of Joseph Smith, the martyr's descendants are members of the Mormon church. There is a story that Israel A. was out visiting his cousin who was President of the Mormon church when, at the time, Israel was President of the RLDS church. They visited and Israel was asked whether he would come to church. He said, "Yes, I will, but I don't want to sit up front with the ministers." So the one in charged introduced him saying. "I want you to meet my cousin. This is Israel A. Smith. He is president of the RLDS church, and I promised him that if he would come to church we wouldn't make any attempt to try to convert him, so I want you all to keep that in mind." After he finished introducing him and making those remarks he said, "For our first hymn we will all stand and sing, 'Israel, Israel, God is Calling.'" I can't sing that hymn ever since Joseph told me

without having that narrative come to mind.

Commitment

Brother Rolfe then closed the periods of sharing singing this commitment so appropriate for us all: "I'm gonna walk - a little closer to my Lord. And when He calls to me, I am gonna be obedient to His word. I'm gonna live as He commands. I'm gonna pray with holy hands. Today I'm gonna walk just a little bit closer to my Lord. "Now Brother Paul, he gave it all, a living sacrifice. He just kept on pushin'. Every day he paid the price. He never claimed that he made the grade, but this one thing he'd do. He pressed on to be like Jesus 'til his time on this earth was through. (Refrain with one slight change. "Today I'm gonna walk a little closer to my Lord, and when He talks to me, I'm gonna be obedient to His word."

"Now James, he said, get it though your head. Don't just hear but do. Looking in a mirror will never tell you what is true. God's just not impressed with how loud, long or fancy you pray. But if you do what His word says to, you know he will bless you in every way. (Refrain with one slight change. "Today I'm gonna walk a little closer to my Lord, and when He calls to me, I'm gonna be obedient to His word."

"I don't make no promises about great and mighty changes. But through this day I'm gonna play what the Holy Ghost arranges. Today I'm gonna walk a little closer to my Lord. I'm gonna listen just a little bit closer, I'm gonna follow just a little bit closer with my Lord."

Alan responded, "Thanks Rob, and thanks to all of you for sharing your testimonies through song and the abilities that the Lord has given you. Thanks for sharing those with us. We'd like to close with "The Spirit of God Like a Fire is Burning". We hope this morning that we have called in our solemn assembly in spirit to spread forth the Kingdom of heaven abroad." After the singing, Brother Smith pronounced the benediction on another worshipful experience of sharing our talents in voice and instrument.

"Our kind and loving heavenly Father, We do truly look forward to that day when, with the hosts of heaven, we will sing Your praises in a world wide anthem, sharing in the love, joy, peace and righteousness of Your kingdom that had spread through the whole earth. Thank You for reminding us this morning through music of the many blessings which You give us and of Your call for us to reach out to share these blessings with others that this world may be Yours. Go with us, Father, and help us this week to find one way, one place, one thing that we can say or do that will bring us closer to You and bring this world closer to Your kingdom. We pray these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen"



Hayride without the hay
When wet fall weather two Sundays in a row made a trip to the Barber farm, the fall fellowship event was held at the church instead. Jennifer Rowland organized the games and a winner roast with all the fixings was held. See the News and Notes for more details.



News & Notes

Priesthood Serving Arkoe

Elder Steven Smith, currently serving the Arkoe, Missouri congregation, has asked the Priesthood of a number of other congregations to furnish ministry for this fledgling congregation for a month at a time. The Mount Ayr Priesthood have chosen to answer his request and will be serving as soon as assigned a month. In the meantime, Seventy Ronald Smith gave that congregation a power point presentation of Matthew 24 on October 8.

Planning Session Sets Dates

The planning session that followed the Zionite dinner October 1 produced the following activity schedule for the next three months:

- November 12 - Congregational movie night.
- November 19 - Thanksgiving dinner at the church.
- December 16 - Caroling and soup supper.
- December 24 - Special Christmas for children.
- December 31 - New Year's Party at Winklers.

Hayride' Experienced Without Hay

Because of rain and more rain, the hayride planned for the Barber farm was celebrated at the church in Mt. Ayr. Jennifer Rowland organized games and activities for all ages.

Pumpkin painting was a featured activity that involved all participants in the evening's activities. Four large pumpkins, each with a generous supply of paint, were placed on squares of plastic designed to protect carpets. Each was accompanied by old tee shirts designed to protect clothes. The children were divided into four teams, each with an adult assistant. The object was for each team to paint a pumpkin to resemble some adult present at the party. Then, the rest of us were to identify the person represented. The four persons depicted were Jennifer Rowland, Yvonne Galusha, Alan Smith and Sherman Phipps.

There was a fire for roasting wieners and marshmallows just outside the back door, with plenty of picnic foods to go with them inside. The evening ended with a worshipful "campfire" led by Ron and Di Smith in the comfort of the sanctuary.

Women's Retreat

Four Mount Ayr women attended the women's retreat at Farwesta. The theme, "Don't Be a Wimp. Endure to the End" provided good ministry for all.

Fall Gathering Features Visions of Zion

Worship and classes for the Fall Gathering of the Elders Conference at Independence, MO. all centered on Zion, the coming Kingdom of God on the earth. Zion was presented as the challenge of the Restoration and the hope of the world. Four Mt Ayr branch members were in attendance.

Fasting Weekend Rescheduled

Due to unforeseen circumstances, this event has to be rescheduled from the first weekend in November. Watch weekly announcements for information.

Branch Movie Night Planned

Sunday evening, November 12, the congregation will assemble at the home of Di and Ron Smith in Lamoni at 6:00 PM to fellowship and view the second in the series of "The Light and the Glory". These are depictions of the life of Joseph Smith, Junior, the martyred prophet of the Restoration. Bring finger foods for a light supper if you wish.

Thanksgiving Dinner

Contact Cheryl Phipps for your assignment for food for the Thanksgiving dinner to be held at the church on Sunday, November 19.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
607 E. Madison
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