



Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch



Newsletter

December 2007

Highway 2 East, Mount Ayr, IA 50854 • 641-464-3435 • www.angel-message.org

Testimonies and Sermon Notes

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Alan Elefson Shares His Testimony of Jesus Christ Communion Sunday

Sherman Phipps welcomed the congregation and invited them to consider why they were here and what it meant to them to renew their covenant with the Lord. Pianist Jan Jordison played several hymns during the congregation's contemplation. The Call to Worship, read by Sherman Phipps, was from Alma 10:27-30, '...I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety, even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance; But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy 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; Having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day, and enter into his rest; And may the Lord grant unto you repentance, ...'

Alan Smith gave the invocation, 'Our kind and loving, heavenly Father, we do recognize the breadth of your love as we come before you this morning. We recognize your call to us to repent for we cannot come into your presence because you cannot treat sin with the least degree of allowance. You give us this opportunity this morning, Father, to come before you and to give up that sin and to pledge to remember our promise to follow you. We know that none of us come here this morning, Father, without some rebellion in our life; some things that we just will not give over to you. So we would ask, Father, that your Spirit would prick each heart and where it has been hardened by sin, help it to become supple again. Help us, as we reach forth our hands, to recognize that you are the giver of all good gifts, and one of these great gifts is for us to feel free of our sin. We would ask that as we come repentant this morning and as we come recognizing that we are not to the place we need to be in your Kingdom, that your Spirit would rest with us in power and touch our hearts and enlighten our minds and lead us to truly commune with you this morning, we pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.'

Test Time

After communion was served, Alan Elefson shared the following message. "Good morning. I look forward to an opportunity to share with you again my testimony of Jesus Christ. We are going to start off with test time. Last time I visited with you we talked a little bit about Darwinism and how sound that theory was or whether it really even amounted to a theory. When I talked about the horse race and you had something that was a hundred-to-one odds, what was that called? Does anybody remember? It was a long shot. A hundred-to-one is a long shot in racing terms so we have Darwinism and I thought we would look at what were the odds of that really happening on a natural basis; just on its own, it just happened. One of the first things we talked about was the 'big bang theory' and in that theory you had to have an explosive force, all matter was concentrated in the universe in one location and there was a big explosion. In order for our universe to exist there were two forces at work for us to consider, and it all occurred in the first second. If there was a big bang that sent all matter in all directions and that was the only force at work, what would happen? You would have infinite small particles of matter going infinitely into space with no planets and no suns, but we have another factor involved and that is gravity. Gravity starts pulling that matter together and forms suns, stars, planets and

Newsletter Mailings

We periodically try to update our mailing list, so if you would prefer not to have the newsletter mailed to you, please let Cheryl Phipps, Debbie Bastow, or Alan Smith know by way of an e-mail or phone call. We can be reached at bastowfam@iowatelecom.net, gmagpap@grm.net, or alandval@mac.com. By phone, contact Debbie at 641-464-2933 or Cheryl at 641-784-6823. Likewise, if you know of someone who would like to receive this outreach ministry that our congregation has to offer, please provide us with names and addresses.

Coming Events

December 9 - The annual caroling party will be held at the home of Jennifer and Bob Rowland on the east edge of Lamoni. Meet at the Rowland home at 5:30. We will go caroling, then gather back at the Rowlands for food and fellowship.

December 16 - The Christmas Cantata, *Born a Savior Born a King*, will be performed at the church at 6:00 p.m.

December 31 - Gather at the Rolfe home in Lamoni for the New Year's Eve party at 7:30 p.m. Bring snack food, games and friends for a fun evening as we usher in the New Year.

galaxies. Science has determined that there is a probability or a certain range that that explosive force has to be offset by gravity. If you are not within that certain range, our universe wouldn't exist as we know it. Does anybody remember what those odds are? I will tell you it wasn't a hundred-to-one, it wasn't a thousand-to-one, and it wasn't a billion-to-one. Does anybody remember what the odds were of that happening naturally? (Ron Smith shared that he wouldn't bet on it.) I wouldn't either because in just that one element in the first second of the existence of the universe, you would have to randomly have a shot that had a one in ten to the negative 18th. It isn't one over 10 or one over 1000, it's one over one with eighteen zeros behind it. That is the odds you are working against of that just happening on its own, it was just natural.

"I went on and shared some more about those odds that science has and what it is telling us. Basically it says that Darwinism or the approach that just everything occurred naturally has everything stacked against it so far that you can't even calculate the odds against it happening. Still we are in a country and a world where evolution is considered the norm; that is what is preached and taught.

We Want God to Prove That He Is

"What I would like to discuss a little more this morning is, if I want to share with my friend, then he's going to probably say, 'take me and introduce me to your God.' Let me see him face to face and then prove to me that He really is God.' I don't know whether it's balancing so many plates on so many sticks or create a world for me to see but our nation and our world seems to be stuck on that. Why wouldn't God come down and just do that for us. Then we would get everybody on our side and we wouldn't have to worry about all this.

"What I would really like to share as a next step is, our God who is a loving God has given us something called faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' Faith is also a source of strength. If you go to Matthew 17:20 after casting a devil out of a child which His disciples could not do, his disciples wanted to know why they could not. Jesus said, 'Because of your unbelief; for verily, I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.' If we had faith as a mustard seed, there is nothing that we couldn't accomplish. He wants us to understand that and grow and nurture that understanding but faith, if presented with true knowledge, can't be developed or nurtured as it should be.

"I always like to tell this story about a couple of my uncles, Uncle Gary Hoover and Uncle Edward. This happened a few years ago. We use to have a farm near Butler, MO; it was the old Elefson family farm. There was a river that ran through the farm called the Miami River. It was barely big enough to be called a river. It was normally twenty foot wide and maybe three or four foot deep but it was the Miami River and our farm butted up against it. One winter my two uncles were out checking cattle and walking along the river looking for them. The river had frozen over so Uncle Gary started walking down the middle of the river on the ice. He yelled over to my other uncle and said, 'Look at me, I am walking on water,' but then he immediately fell through the ice up to his waist. Edward immediately started laughing and yelled back, 'O ye of little faith.'

Suffering Makes One a Stronger Believer

"We think that maybe walking on ice is an easy way of walking on water. Peter was able to walk on water with faith that didn't always support him. I think that faith is an important element to understand in our beliefs of God. I recently read a book called A Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity. The author spends the time making a case to overcome about eight major objections that he sees occurring. The first of these objections is, if there is a loving God, why does this pain wracked world groan so much under suffering and evil? During an interview with Peter Kreft, a philosophy professor at Boston College and Vanderbilt for over 35 years, the following was expressed, 'In fact it is significant that most objections to the existence of God from the problem of suffering come from outside observers who are quite

comfortable. Whereas, those who actually suffer are, as often as not, made into stronger believers by their suffering.' Did everybody get that? In fact it is significant that the most objections to the existence of God from the problem of suffering come from outside observers. Whereas those who actually suffer are often stronger believers because of their suffering.

"Immediately there were a number of instances that came to my mind thinking about that point and realizing the truth of that statement. This summer I had the opportunity to go to the Iowa State Fair. While I was there we were suppose to meet with a friend at one of the free music pavilions. As we approached the pavilion, I heard a young lady singing in a very beautiful voice. I appreciated what she was singing. When I was actually able to see her, I saw that she was in a wheel chair. The first thing I observed was that she only had one leg but as I looked a little closer, I realized that she was also missing her right arm. Then she moved her hair back around her head, and I realized that her other arm was shorter and at the end of the arm was a single finger. All of us would probably say what a terrible life to have to go through with those disabilities. I wouldn't volunteer for it. Yet the next song that she sang was a Christian song, and she shared another song or two and talked about her album of gospel music that she wanted to share. I realized that she was testifying of her Lord Jesus Christ in spite of the world that she was living in. Would I be able to do that?

"Another example that I picked up over the years was the story of Sergei Kordakov. Sergei was a Russian who defected to the United States. His story started back in Russia. When he was growing up he lost both of his parents. His father was killed by Stalin and he was raised in true communist fashion. He was given all the appropriate schooling to ingrain in him the communist ideology. As he grew up he became the captain of a group whose purpose was to go around and bust up any unapproved prayer or church meetings that were going on. When he got into this he saw a lady named Natasha. The first time he saw her at a prayer meeting he grabbed her by the hair and pulled her out of the meeting. He threw her into the street. The next time he came to bust up the meeting, she was there again. He thought, 'I'll take care of her this time.' He had a club and beat her up so she wouldn't be able to stand for a week, threw her out and closed up the meeting. He came back a third time and there she sat. He came to the point where he could no longer do that again. He'd seen the testimony of this young lady, and he saw the testimony of another elderly lady who also attended the meeting. He lifted his club to beat this elderly lady and show her who was responsible, when he heard her say, 'Lord, save this young man.' He didn't know what to make of this. He dropped his club and left. He had to get out of doing this. However, he was still a communist. That's how he had been raised. He didn't understand what was going on, but he felt like he could no longer do what he had been doing.

"Later he was on a Russian ship that anchored off the coast of Canada. He decided that he needed to defect so he jumped ship and started swimming. He was two miles from shore in a heavy fog when he started swimming. After two hours he realized that he had come upon the same ship that he had jumped off of. Two hours of swimming had just taken him around in a circle. Since he had made the decision that he could no longer live in Russia in those conditions, he took off again. He still couldn't find the shore, but he came to the conclusion, 'Lord, I can't go any further myself. I know you exist. I believe in you and my life is in your hands.' Basically, he passed out after that and was later found on the shore safe and sound. He has developed a strong faith now in his Lord and Savior.

"One last one story that I wanted to share with you is about Brian Sternburg. Brian was a strapping, athletic youth who had become a very good gymnast. In fact, he went to college and started getting all kinds of awards and medals. He started to think that he was pretty good and that he had done it all by himself with hard work. He got to the point where he thought he was really good at trampoline where he was earning lots of medals, that was his thing. He decided that because he was so good he didn't need to mess with spotters anymore. The spotters, of course, are around

the trampoline to keep you from injuring yourself or flying off the side and hitting the floor. He was working out perfecting his triple back flip when something went wrong. Instead of landing in the middle of the trampoline after reaching full height doing his triple back flip, he landed on the edge of the trampoline on the back of his neck. His neck was crushed and Brian became paralyzed from the neck down. He became a quadriplegic.

Brian spent an extended period of time in recovery and through that recovery period, he had a full range of emotions, anger, blame, despondency and depression. He finally came to the conclusion that he needed more in his life and accepted Jesus Christ. After that point he was able to rehabilitate, not to the point of walking, but simply to sit in a wheelchair which allowed him to share his testimony of Jesus Christ. At a large gathering the thing that summarized the whole of his being was when he was wheeled out on the stage. Instead of this 190 pound gymnast that could do anything and everything, here sat a 100 pound young man that could barely hold his head up. He was strapped into his chair and had to be wheeled out. This is his testimony, 'I hope no one ever has to go through what I've gone through unless that's what it takes to come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.' He was willing to sacrifice all that his body could do. He knew that what he gained in knowledge of Jesus Christ was far more important than what he lost in his physical body. Do we have the faith of a Brian Sternburg? Do we have the faith of a Sergei Kordakov?

Prayer and Fasting Help Us to Increase Our Faith

"We set in a country where we don't have to worry about eating our next meal or warm clothes. I have plenty of firewood even if the power goes out, thanks to Marianne and me. Our Lord asks us to have faith in Him even in our luxury. He asks us to come to a knowledge of Him and accept what He can do for us.

"When I talked about Matthew 17:20 previously, I talked about 'nothing was impossible,' but does anyone know what the next verse is after that? We sometimes tend to cut off a verse where they put the number, but it isn't necessarily the end of the statement or the end of the thought. So let me read to you Matthew 17:21 because it adds a significant condition to this promise. 'Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.'

"This morning we had the opportunity to remember our Lord and Savior in the service that we had earlier. Hopefully we have taken an opportunity for prayer and fasting and now we need to stretch forth our faith in Jesus Christ and see if we can do those things where He says nothing is impossible and realize what we can bring to our Lord and Savior in this world.

Benediction on the service was given by Sherman Phipps, 'Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Son, Jesus, and for the sacrifice that you have made in sending your Son to the earth to be an example to us and to be crucified and resurrected. We know that the only opportunity that we have to come back into your presence with joy and rejoicing is through your Son and the sacrifice that He has made for us. We thank you, Lord, for the opportunity once again here today to consider our relationship with you and the covenant we have made with you and to renew that covenant. We know that there will come a time when we must stand before you and be judged, and the time to fulfill that covenant will be past. We pray that we might not prolong or put off our response to you and our firm dedication to fulfilling the covenant that we have made with you to always remember you, to obey your commandments. We pray that we might go from here this day and truly do that. We know we cannot do it except by your power so we ask, Lord, that you would bless us with the presence and the power of your Holy Spirit to accompany us each day. We pray it in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen.'

Rodney Bastow Asks, "What Does God Want From Us?"

Norman Nelson, presiding

Norman Nelson read from John 3:16-17 for a call to worship, '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 send not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.' Jim Barber offered the invocation, 'Our kind and gracious Heavenly Father we are thankful for this opportunity to come together this morning. We invite thy spirit, Father, to touch each one of us, to lift our hearts to Thee, to open our minds that we might be able to receive. Be with Rodney as he brings the message of the hour and guide him and direct him. Bless us all, we pray in Jesus name, Amen.'

"The scripture I felt directed to use this morning is from Matthew 16:14-18; 25-30. 'And when Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some Elias; and other Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him. Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.'

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments. Break not my commandments for to save your lives; for whosoever will save his life in this world, shall lose it in the world to come. And whosoever will lose his life in this world, for my sake, shall find it in the world to come. Therefore, forsake the world, and save your souls; for what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.'

"Sometimes when I speak, I look for signs to tell me, I guess, that God is going to be with me. I think if I am correct that the last time that I spoke the Kinnaman family was seated right there (points to front row), and I remember how much that meant to me the last time so it was a sign to me this morning to see the Kinnaman family there again, and I appreciated their ministry of music. Thank you for being here.

"One thing about it with Debbie doing the Newsletter, there's no way that I can not know about the schedule so I have known about today for awhile, but it just seemed like it got here abruptly. After being in charge of last Wednesday's prayer service, I was thinking when's the next time I am suppose to do something? It dawned on me that it was this Sunday so I hope I have prepared and that I am ready for today. I hope I will be able to serve my Heavenly Father. I feel like the Spirit is here and that I have been in your prayers. It is very important for me that I have those prayers. I hope that if you feel like we have been blessed that you will give the glory to our Heavenly Father.

A Grandfather's Joy

"Last weekend we were gone as you might have noticed. We went to St. Louis. My daughter-in-law Nina's sister got married last weekend. In their family that is a really big event, actually the whole thing lasts about a week, but the rehearsal and rehearsal supper were on Friday night. Of course, we had to go down and take care of Sofia, our granddaughter, while they went to the supper which lasts for awhile. So we were the babysitters. Actually they didn't have much choice because everyone else was involved in the wedding party, and it was up to us to take care of Sofia. For you that aren't keeping track, Sofia is now 13 months old. She doesn't walk, 13 months old and doesn't walk, that is because she runs everywhere. She doesn't talk but she can make it very apparent what she wants. She makes her wishes known.

"Patrick and Nina have done a pretty good job (I don't remember doing this when our children were little). They have really childproofed their home. You know the outlets our kids used to stick things in to, they have these clever little things that keep the kids from getting in there. They had to buy a special type of stereo cabinet to put the VCR and TV in because she was really having a good time programming those. Her favorite

things to get a hold of are remote controls and cell phones; she loves those. Anything that she can get within her reach is fair game. The dogs have even found that out. She took a lot of attention, and we enjoyed every minute of it. They complain about how they have to watch her all the time, they can't get anything done. We thought this is great, just send her to us for awhile, and we'll do this, but they haven't agreed to do that yet.

"The wedding started at 6:00 on Saturday evening, but we had to leave at 3:30 for pictures. We didn't know how to get there and Sofia had to go anyway and wherever Sofia went we were going to go too. You could count on that so we went with them. The wedding was in this great big old historic building, the Coronado, which has apartments upstairs and big ballrooms downstairs. Sofia doesn't like to be held, she likes to be on the go so they just turned her loose. There were 200 people at the wedding and I think she found every one of them. She would just find them, and of course, I hate to say this because I am prejudice, but you can't help but love the little kid. She'll look up and give you that little smile and even some of the guys who seemed a little bit calloused to little kids knew who Sofia was. I guess she was our claim to fame that night. As long as we were around her, people could understand why we were there, and we felt a lot more comfortable to be there because of her.

Sofia was supposed to be the flower girl, but she didn't quite make it up the aisle. Her mother had to pick her up. The plan was that her mom would pick her up and give her to her mom, Mindy, and then we would have the wedding. Apparently they didn't consult with Sofia because she didn't stay in her grandma's arms two seconds. She was walking back and forth among the bridesmaids and the groomsmen. The rabbi whom I really liked, he did Patrick and Nina's wedding, said, 'You can see from your niece being here, Christina, that this is what marriage is all about.' I liked that and thought that was good. Finally Patrick picked her up and she let him hold her for awhile, but it was definitely Sofia's show that night. Even Christina was watching Sofia instead of watching her husband which most brides do. That might annoy some people. It might have annoyed me if it hadn't been my granddaughter. I loved it. It was so much fun that night chasing her around the building and making sure she didn't get into trouble or do something that she shouldn't do. We enjoyed that weekend.

As she grows up this might not go over too well, and she might not be allowed to continue to do this. She might have to learn what she can and can't do. She even kind of eats what she wants to eat. It is hard to describe this but I remember when our boys were growing up, you got baby food in jars. You always mixed the applesauce in with the creamed peas and forced them to eat it. You remember that. It was the only way you could get them to eat. Now, you put this little mat down on her high chair, and she eats broken up pieces of regular people food except for some things she is not allowed to eat. She picks at it and feeds herself. She is getting pretty smart. She is just like her grandpa. She picks out the foods she likes best. As she gets older she may have to learn to eat more vegetables. She may have to learn what she can mess with and what she can't. She found out last week that one of the dogs she really shouldn't mess with too much. The other two are fine but this dog is apparently just not a little kid dog type. She will find as she gets older that there will be things that her parents cannot protect her from. She will find that she will have to make the right choices so that she can stay happy and safe. Hopefully as she grows she will continue to love and be loved as she is now and she will continue to smile.

I substitute taught twice this week. After prayer meeting Wednesday night where I talked about substituting that week, I got called back in on Thursday. It was the same group of 7th graders that I had enjoyed the other day. Unfortunately they are getting to know me a little too well and getting a little too comfortable. Wouldn't you know it, the first class that we had was a health class and guess what we talked about: stress. Now how much stress could a 7th grader have honestly? So I would ask them what stresses you or what causes you the most stress? What was it? You're right; homework, work that they had to do,

and parents. Can you imagine this, parents getting on their case about something. That kind of surprised me too. It was funny after we had talked about that and some other things. Later on that day (I call it recess duty), they have a thing after lunch where they go out, it is kind of a social time. We went out looking for something that the lawnmower had lost. I was with one of the other retired school teachers who was substituting that day, and he was saying, 'Boy I am glad I got out of education when I did. Kids just won't work anymore like they used to.' Here I am remembering the kids talking about having too much homework, and he's talking about how the kids won't do the homework. Is it they have work and just won't do it or what is going on here?

We talked about discipline and I had to agree with him. You just don't discipline kids like you used to. The things that I used when I was first teaching at Eagleville would get me charged with child abuse now. It is just a different world. I am not sure what is right. I don't know that we expect as much from our young people as we use to. I am not sure that we teach them the values that they might need to be successful. Especially I am concerned about if they are learning to try their hardest to do their best at whatever they do and to take pride in their accomplishments.

We Need to Care About People in Our Communities

The first time I subbed about three weeks ago was in a Spanish class. People asked me, 'Do you know Spanish?' I replied, 'Heavens no, but I do know how to run a VCR which worked well, but I amazed several students that day because I knew who they were. I knew who their parents and grandparents were. I said to this one girl, 'You look like you're a pitcher.' And she said, 'How can you tell that?' I said, 'You have a pitcher's arm.' I guess that bothered her because her mother said something to Debbie about it the next time she subbed. I knew this girl was one of the pitchers on the softball team. It seemed unusual to them that I would know this. Well, I had watched my dad and if he were here today, he would say, 'There's Danny Kinnaman. He's so and so's son. He lives down here by Albany,' and he would talk to you and say, 'How's your mother doing?' or 'How is this going on?' That is how I was raised and I guess it is just our way of showing that we cared about people because we got to know them and we took an interest in them and the activities that they were in and the things they were doing. I thought everyone took an interest in the people in their community. I haven't decided yet if that is true.

What Does God Want from Us?

Deb and I have found out this fall, and we even discussed this with her brother the other day. When you mention the word 'retired' to some people they associate it with needing something to do. Now I had always associated the word 'retired' with doing what I wanted to do. In my case I am not sure that is going to happen. I think that I control my farm, but I am not sure that it does not control me and I am still working on that.

"What does God want from us? What does He expect? Are we doing His will or are we doing our own will? Are we doing his work or are we letting someone else do it for us? Do we treat others with a love and a smile? Do we take the time to get to know them? I am still learning what God wants me to do and like Sofia I am learning that I need to eat more vegetables, probably less sweets, and I need to make better choices. I am learning that I need to be more loving and smile more. There are things that cause me stress. They include having too much work to do and also being told what to do. I need to work harder on following God's commandments and on being more obedient. I need to always remember the values that I was raised with, and I need to try to be the best that I can be. My Heavenly Father knows me and He cares for me and He knows who I am and what I have been doing. I need to make sure that it is God's will that is done and not my own. Since I have retired I have chosen certain activities to be involved with. They are activities that I enjoy doing, and I hope that they are also activities that are allowing me to serve my Heavenly Father. There are other activities that I would like to be involved in, and I pray that I will

be directed to be a part of those activities that I should be doing.

“It’s hard for me to speak without having a reading and most of the readings that I have I’ve used, but I found one that I thought maybe was appropriate and says what I am trying to say today. I thought it was unusual. This is one that George told us we could memorize with our fingers. It is John 14. I don’t have it memorized by the way but maybe some of you do.

‘Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And when I go, I will prepare a place for you, and come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believeest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive because it seeth him not; neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I. And I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of darkness, who is of this world, cometh, but hath no power over me, but he hath power over you. And I tell you these things, that ye may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.’”

Norman Nelson pronounced the benediction over the service. ‘Dear Father in Heaven, we thank you for the words you have given us. We thank you especially for the Holy Spirit to lead and to guide and to direct us. We ask that you will continue to bless us with Thy Spirit that we may take with us the thoughts which you have given us and use them to help and to heal and to be the people that you want us to be that Zion may soon be among us and that we might truly be yours. These blessings we ask in the name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.’

Ron Smith

Thanksgiving Proclamations

Good Morning. It’s a pleasure to be with you. I’d like to read from 1st Chronicles, the 16th chapter. I’m going to read selected verses, starting with the 8th verse and I’ll end with the 36th. “Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name; let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. Remember his marvelous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; show forth from day to day his salvation. Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvelous works among all nations. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols; but the Lord made the heavens. Glory and honor are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place. Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come before him; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Fear before him, all the earth; the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth. Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; let the fields rejoice and all that is therein. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judge the earth. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel forever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord.”

How are you today? I am blessed. That is the response that George Knotts has taught us all to give. We have all been very blessed. We’re coming up to Thanksgiving. It’s one of those very special celebrations that, for some reason, has gotten missed in the merchandising of all our holidays. You’re starting to see Halloween lights and all kinds of things at all the other holidays, but Thanksgiving is just a time to get together and give thanks and eat a lot of food. I know that all of you are anxious to eat the food that you smell cooking in the kitchen, but before that happens, I would like to spend a few minutes talking about Thanksgiving and the Lord and our relationship to Him. As I was preparing for this sermon I got on the internet and started looking at Thanksgiving Day proclamations. I asked myself, “What would I write in a Thanksgiving Day proclamation?” I want you to think about that while you listen.

President Bush’s Proclamation

Just last Thursday, George W. Bush gave a Thanksgiving Day proclamation. I thought you might be interested in at least knowing that our President gave one and see what he had to say. He said, among other things, that, “While Thanksgiving is a time to gather in spirit of gratitude with family, friends and neighbors, it is also an opportunity to serve others and to share our blessings with those in need by answering the universal call to love a neighbor as we want to be loved ourselves. In this way we make our nation a more hopeful and caring place. This Thanksgiving may we reflect upon the past year with gratefulness and look toward the future with hope. Let us give thanks for all we have been given and ask God to continue to bless our families and our nation.” After officially making this next Thursday Thanksgiving day, he continued, “I encourage all Americans to gather together in their homes and places of worship with family, friends and loved ones to reinforce the tie that binds us and give thanks for the freedoms and many blessings that we enjoy.” I thought you would like to know that President Bush is asking us to get together with our families and to give thanks to God for all of the blessings that we do enjoy. And surely we have many, many, many blessings.

Earliest Thanksgiving Proclamation

I decided to look for some of the original Thanksgiving Day proclamations because I know that some of them say a lot more explicitly things about God and our relationship to Him and our need for repentance. I went back to see if I could find the earliest one. The earliest one I found was actually in the Bible. It was the one from 1st Chronicles, the 16th chapter that I read to you. That was the thanksgiving day feast that David proclaimed when they brought the arc of the covenant back to Jerusalem. In the seventh verse it said, "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." He gave every man in Jerusalem some bread and meat on that day. He gave food out to everybody and proclaimed a day of thanksgiving and brought the arc of the covenant back to Jerusalem and they sang that psalm. That was the earliest Thanksgiving day proclamation that I found.

Pilgrim's Thankfulness

Coming to more recent times, we can find a number of proclamations that were made for Thanksgiving Days by the pilgrims. (There were a number of different days of thanksgiving that they had, there wasn't just one.) We usually look back to the feast in 1621 as the "first" Thanksgiving Day. In 1620 the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock and founded their little colony. By the end of that first winter, half of them had died. If you can imagine a group of people about the size of our congregation, and half of us dying in one winter! That was a terrible, terrible time for them. But the local Indian tribe befriended and helped them in the spring to learn to fish and plant crops and how to hunt. The pilgrims were city dwellers. It would be like somebody sticking a gun in my hand and saying, "Go hunt." (I had that happen one time. I was on a ranch out in Wyoming and they wanted to go hunt some coyotes so they gave me a shotgun and sat me up in a place and said now we're going to go down and see if we can drive the coyotes up and then you can shoot them. I was sitting there just praying that the Lord wouldn't have any coyotes come that day because I wouldn't know what to do with a gun. I had only shot a BB gun and a 22 before. Fortunately, I didn't see any coyotes that day.) The Pilgrims were taught how to hunt and they had a bountiful harvest and so they got together with the Indians for a big celebration. That's the time we think of as that first Thanksgiving. I didn't find any proclamation associated with that particular one. I did find a proclamation from 1676, so this is 55 years later. "The council has thought meet to appoint and set apart the 29th of this instant June as a solemn day of thanksgiving and praise to God for His goodness and favor, many particulars of which mercy might be instance but we doubt not that those who are sensible of God's affliction have been as diligent to espy Him returning to us and that the Lord may behold us as a people offering praise and thereby glorify Him. The council doth commend it to the respected ministers, elders and people of this jurisdiction, solemnly and seriously to keep the same, beseeching that being persuaded by the mercies of God we may all, even this whole people, offer up our bodies and souls as a living and an acceptable service unto God by Jesus Christ."

Wouldn't it be interesting if President Bush had said that that our job this Thanksgiving was to be ready to be a people who were looking for Jesus' coming? That's what it meant to "espy Jesus' coming". They were going to be looking for Jesus' coming and they certainly didn't want to be caught not being thankful. So they were going to have a day of thanksgiving and a day to offer up their bodies and souls as a living and acceptable service unto God by Jesus Christ. You might think about that if you're going to make a Thanksgiving Day proclamation. What would you like to say about Jesus' coming and about the things he would do?

President Washington's Proclamation

Coming closer another 100 years, you have George Washington. This morning Julie read from the Continental Congress of 1776. There were many different days of Thanksgiving. Each of the states did their Thanksgiving on different days until after the Civil War, so there were lots of proclamations that were given.

In 1789, George Washington proclaimed a general day of thanksgiving. He began it, "Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of God, to obey His will, and to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor, and whereas both houses of congress have, by their joint committee, requested me to recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness, now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the people of these states to the service of that great and glorious being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is or that will be, that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His care and protection and in general for all the great and various favors which He has been pleased to confer upon us. And also that we may then unite most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and ruler of nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions..." and he goes on.

I thought that was interesting because when George Washington was not only asking us to come to a day of thanksgiving he was also asking us to acknowledge our sins and to ask God to forgive us from our sins both as a nation and as individuals as well.

President Lincoln's Proclamation

Again we come down to the time of Abraham Lincoln and Julie quoted from one that was from 1861. That was at the beginning of the Civil War. Lincoln was very much concerned about the transgressions of the nation. He believed that the Civil War was a judgment by God upon our nation for the sins that it had committed and he referenced that a number of times. Historians nowadays like to excise that part out of Lincoln's speech, saying he wasn't really talking about slavery and some of those kinds of things, but he did say that a number of times. He said, "We have forgotten God. It seemed to me fitting and proper that God should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged by the whole American people." The proclamation I have chosen is from 1863. This is toward the end of the Civil War and Lincoln says, "The year that is drawing towards its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God...I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union."

Lincoln saw our difficulties with the great civil war and the many millions of people who died in that war as the judgment of God for our transgressions. He asked that we would in humility come before God and also thank Him for the many blessings that He had given.

What Might We Say in Our Own Proclamations?

So as I was thinking of what my proclamation might be, I started listing some of the things that I am thankful for. I say things because the first things I thought of were things and after that I thought of some things I'm thankful for that aren't really things. I thought of my guitar. I'm really thankful for my guitar. I'm thankful for the opportunity it has given me to give ministry in many parts of

the world and just for the enjoyment that it brings. Di and I get a chance to sing out at the nursing home. One of the residents, Joan, just enjoys it so tremendously. She sings louder than anybody can stand there, but she really enjoys it, as do many others.

Thankful for Health

I was thinking of health. Some of you younger people don't appreciate health. I can understand that. When you have so many things, it's hard to be thankful for them sometimes. We take them for granted. That was like one of the Presidents was saying, we've got so many blessings we have kind of forgotten where they came from and health, of course, comes from God. Steve Murdock told me that if you're over 50 and you get up and it doesn't hurt somewhere then you must be in Heaven.

I think of the brace that I wear on my leg and I'm thankful for that. I was walking along the street over in east Africa and there were people all around. All of a sudden I was aware that there was a little guy. I was right on top of him, and then I realized that the reason he was little was because he didn't have any legs. When I looked closer I saw he was also missing an arm. He was probably one of those who had his limbs blown off by a land mine. There are a lot of people like that. He was begging on the street. He was nicely dressed and had a tie on. Somebody helped him get dressed and got him out there in the morning. I thought, I can walk. I'm really happy for my leg. I'm happy for the people that have prayed for me, because I know there are still people who pray for me for my leg. I was able to go that whole time and in all six weeks I didn't fall once. I thank the Lord for my health. Even though sometimes we get sick, and sometimes we have some difficulties, there are always other people who have a lot more difficulties than we have and it's nice to be healthy.

Thankful for Heritage and Scriptures

After I got through listing some of the things I'm thankful for, I thought about my heritage and how thankful I am to have the scriptures and the gospel and the testimony of my parents and my grandparents. You know the gospel is only one generation deep. That means, Sam, if you don't get it, then your children don't get it. It's only one generation deep. Your parents may understand the gospel but if you don't get it, then it doesn't get passed on. I thought of the scriptures that we have that link us to all that God has done through all of the years. If we didn't have the scriptures, we wouldn't have the link. This came home to me when I was in Nigeria. I was talking with some people who believed that they were from the house of Israel. I asked if they had any details about their trip from the land of Israel. I said, "I'm really interested in the details about how you got here or any of your story." He said, "No, at the time of the diaspora when they left Israel, our forefathers were illiterate and they didn't bring any records with them. All we have is that they passed down from generation to generation that we were of the house of Israel." That was all they knew. He said, "There are some things that we do that are like the law of Moses." But they didn't have the law.

I thought about in the Book of Mormon when Nephi went back for the plates of Laban. They needed those because if they didn't have them, their children wouldn't know the law. They wouldn't know how to read and write. They wouldn't have had the connection. They didn't have the record before they left. Nephi's father Lehi spent a lot of time looking in those records and finding out the things that connected them with the promises from the past. Nephi delighted in sharing with his brothers and the family all of those things in the records that connected them with the prophecies of Isaiah and the coming of the Messiah. Here they were wanderers. They were lost. Their civilization, everything they knew, was gone. Can you imagine packing us up and taking off to the moon and knowing that the earth was going to be destroyed behind us? As far as they were concerned, they were gone. They were wanderers. Nephi's brother Jacob, (Jacob 5:43) bemoans the fact that "We are all alone here." It was the scriptures that kept them grounded and rooted with the things that had been written.

Thankful for God's Promises

We too have those scriptures that tie us to the covenant. The Lord has made covenants with us and sent the gospel so that we can

remember. He says that He will turn the hearts of the children to the promises made to the fathers and that Zion will be. We can look forward to that no matter how badly the earth seems to be getting, no matter how much cause we might think to feel sorry for ourselves. He says, "I am with you, and you have the promises and don't forget." I'm grateful for life. I know I shared with most of you at the prayer service the testimony that we had with Mom's passing, but I'd like to share it one more time. I hope that is O.K. We had a wonderful, wonderful experience at the time of Mom's death. Alan and Valle and Di and myself, and Steve and Karen were all in the room with Mom. I'd brought my guitar and we were singing songs. Alan said, "Let's administer to Mom." I asked Mom if she wanted us to administer to her and she indicated that that would be O.K. by moving her mouth. She hadn't said anything for about a day. The three of us boys laid our hands on her head and Valle and Karen and Di held hands with Mom around the bed. I anointed and we prayed. Alan prayed that God would open his arms wide and take Mom home. She had a pulse when we started and when we were done, she didn't. It was a beautiful, beautiful experience and I know that many times Mom will be missed, but after that kind of experience with the spirit of God as powerful as it was, it's hard to cry because it was a powerful experience for all of us. The Lord says that he will take away the sting of death.

God's Blessings Even in Death

I'd like to share just one more along that line. It was when we were over in Kenya. I went to the home of Maurice Simba. Maurice wasn't home, and I was asked to bless the house, his wife and two young daughters. I offered a prayer for their home and family. Shortly thereafter, Eric Odida was preaching. Eric's topic was, "If you had one more day to live and this was the day, what would you do?" Suppose God gave you just one more day. Maurice heard that and thought it was a good thing. He came and shared it with his congregation and said, "If you had one more day to live, what would you do?" While they were singing that Sunday, his mother Hulda, said, "This singing is so nice, let's record it. If one of us were to die we would still be able to hear the singing." So Maurice turned on the tape recorder and they recorded the singing that day. The next morning at 6:30 in the morning he was on his bicycle going to work when he was hit by a matatu (bus) and was killed. The police didn't notify his family. That evening they were looking for him. Eric and the rest were checking in all the hospitals and morgues. They finally came to a police station where a receptionist knew what had happened and was surprised that the family had not been notified. I received a remarkable letter from Eric sharing all the blessings that had come to the family. He said, "The Lord prepared us and the Lord had prepared Maurice." Maurice had rededicated himself on that Sunday to taking care of the congregation. He was a deacon and the only member of the priesthood in that congregation. He had brought his family to the Lord (that's another story). At the funeral, Eric said it was just amazing. All of the church people came from all over Kenya. The priesthood were all there. They did all of the work. They brought the water. In Kenya the men sit back and the women carry the water and do the cooking. The men chipped in and the family did not have to do anything. Normally funerals were such sad events and people with long faces. He said there was so much joy at that particular funeral. Maurice's mother Hulda said to Eric, "So this is what the gospel is all about."

I thought that was interesting. "So this is what the gospel is all about." Life and even death is part of God's plan and we can be thankful for all of those blessings even through dealing with death.

Thankful for Our Nation

I also am thankful for our nation. Sometimes we forget. We have been coming to church all our lives. We forget that there are people in this world in which we live in this day who don't get to come to church, who don't get to worship when they want to because of the nations they live in and the laws of the land. When they do a baptism in China they have to do it at midnight because they will be arrested. When they put out the sign in Cuba that said "Church of Jesus Christ" the police came the same day and said, "You can't put that sign outside. You can have it inside if

you want to, but you can't have it out on the street." There are people who are being arrested and being killed even in this day – in our day. This isn't way back then day. Yet we can come and share and worship God and be thankful for all He has given.

Ron's Thanksgiving Day Proclamation

So what would I do if I were giving a Thanksgiving Day proclamation? I tried to write one. Really, it's not so much what I write that's important. What's important is that all of us give thanks. It's important that each of you make your own proclamation in your life, in your family, in your community, that you proclaim what's important about Thanksgiving. Here is my Thanksgiving day proclamation: Give thanks unto the Lord. Call upon his Holy Name. Make known his deeds among the people. Sing psalms unto him. Talk ye of his wonderous works. Glory ye in His holy name. Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord in strength. Seek His face continually. Consider the marvelous works that He has done, His wonders and the judgments of His mouth. This day we remember that we are nothing and that our being is dependent on God to whom we look for the remission of our many sins. On this day we gather with family and friends around a bountiful table to thank our beneficent creator for the wonders of his love and his manifold blessings. May God bless you this Thanksgiving and let us all be thankful for all that God had given us.

Sherman Phipps The Choice is Ours

"Good morning. There are a couple of things I want to say before we start. I want to tell you first of all that it has been a good morning for me all ready, just being back and being here. We got home last night and I called Kathy (Akers) and asked for her help. I have always appreciated Kathy who is always there and wanting to help. I wanted to use several songs this morning, read some scriptures and then say a few words. Kathy expressed to me this morning that she was concerned that she wouldn't be quite as ready as she wanted to be since I didn't give her much time to prepare. I assured her that she and I were in the same boat, and that actually that was a good thing because if you didn't get what the Lord wanted for you this morning, it wouldn't be worth coming to church any how. If all you got was what she and I prepared, you shouldn't have come. I want to thank Kathy for her help this morning, and I appreciate her shouldering part of the burden here that is due to my slowness.

"I hope the scriptures and the songs that we use this morning and whatever other comments that might be made will be directed by the Spirit, and I would ask you to pray for that. I want to start by reading a scripture from the Doctrine and Covenants and one from Isaiah after which we will sing a hymn. 'Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, the great I AM, whose arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins, who will gather his people even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, even as many as will hearken to my voice, and humble themselves before me, and call upon me in mighty prayer . . . lift up your hearts and be glad, for I am in your midst, and am your advocate with the Father; and it is his good will to give you the kingdom; and as it is written, Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, being united in prayer according to my command, ye shall receive; and ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect, for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts; wherefore the decree hath gone forth from the Father that they shall be gathered in unto one place, upon the face of this land, to prepare their hearts, and be prepared in all things, against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth upon the wicked; for the hour is night, and the day soon at hand, when the earth is ripe; and all the proud, and they that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and I will burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that wickedness shall not be upon the earth; for the hour is nigh, and that which was spoken by mine apostles must be fulfilled; for as they spoke, so shall it come to pass; for I will reveal

myself from heaven with power and great glory, with all the hosts thereof, and dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years, and the wicked shall not stand.' (D & C 28:1a; 2b-g)

'For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. . . . I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared; The Lord of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and say unto Zion, Behold, thou art my people. Awake, awake, stand up. . . ' (Isaiah 51:3, parts of 15-17)

'Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem . . . Therefore, my people shall know my name; yea, in that day they shall know that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I. And then shall they say, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings unto them, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings unto them of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion . . . the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her;' (this Babylon that Alan talked about in class this morning) be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. . . . for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rewar'd.' (Isaiah 52:6-8 and parts of 10, 11 and 12)

'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my people be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. . . . whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace . . . and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.' (Isaiah 54:10, 15, 17; 55:1-3, 6-11)

"This then is the word of the Lord to those who will humble themselves and look unto Him and do His work. 'As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; . . . the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.' (Isaiah 59:21, 20)

Each one must choose if he will be part of God's work

"I hope, in spite of my poor reading this morning, that you have been able to catch the message; that Zion will be and that the promises of the Lord will be fulfilled, every one. He desires greatly that each one of you might have a part in that work which is shortly to come to pass. It's a work that has been in progress from before

the foundation of the earth. I don't know how else to say it because I can't put in words God's eternal being and the fact that His work is eternal. There is a part of that work which has been prophesied and spoken of for generations that I believe is right on our doorstep. His call to you this morning, I believe, would be that you make a choice as to whether you are going to be apart of that or not. That's a choice that each one of us needs to make now. We can't put it off. It is not something that we can do later. We have to do it now.

"When I talk about this and about how the time is upon us, I don't do that in terms of some kind of a doomsday thing. But it is very important, I think, and this is, I hope, the Spirit speaking to you and not just Sherman. It is very important that we choose whether we are going to be His people now or not. He has made so many promises to His people and He will fulfill those promises. Why would we not want to receive those promises; the promise of hope and peace, safety when those who refuse Him shall be destroyed? You know I read last night the story of the sons of Helaman, the 2000 young men that went with him and then another 60 joined them so I guess there were 2060. They had been taught by their mothers that so long as they put their faith and trust in God, they would be protected. I don't think it says that they were taught that they would never die or anything like that, but that they would be protected and would be able to do whatever God called upon them to do.

God has prepared a way for us to fulfill that which He calls upon us to do

"Well, that is His promise to us this morning too. Maybe the thing that is coming for us is the opportunity to share with a neighbor or somebody we work with. Maybe it isn't this cataclysmic thing that we kind of make reference to. Whatever it is that God calls upon us to do, He has prepared a way for us to do it. However, He leaves the choice to us. It is up to us to choose whether we are going to serve or not, whether we are going to accept these great gifts that He has promised for His people.

"We talk some about the gifts and powers of God, and you could probably recite those as well or better than I could; the gifts of speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues, of healing, wisdom, miracles, dreams, and knowledge. Why would we not want those gifts? They have been promised to us. We could have them in our midst. We do have to a certain extent from time to time, but I think we would probably all agree that there is much more yet to be experienced. It is a matter of us choosing who we will serve and whether or not we will be the recipients of the gifts of our Father in Heaven.

"We have to decide whether we are going to choose to obey His word. Today might be a simple one to look at. Do we keep the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy? I don't know what that means. Obviously, you need to be led by the Spirit. I am not going to stand up here and tell you it means you don't do this or you don't do that because Jesus Himself is the one who got criticized because He picked corn on the Sabbath. He told them that they didn't understand, they had missed the meaning. He also healed on the Sabbath. He did some things that those who professed to be His people felt were wrong, and they criticized Him for it. We need to be led by the Spirit in knowing how to apply these things.

"However, there are some things that I think we can be pretty sure will lead us into the path where He wants us to be so that He can bless us; things like prayer, fasting and the study of God's word. Fasting is the one that I think about a lot because I don't understand it. Of course, we can talk about refraining from eating and drinking certain things. I am sure that is a part of fasting but then there is the scripture that says, 'prayer and fasting or in other words prayer and rejoicing.' What does that mean if rejoicing is equated with fasting? Obviously there are examples of those who have fasted, and it meant not eating or drinking for periods of time, but I think it may mean other things. There may be other things that we need to do without in our lives to help us focus on what it is that the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us.

Are we going to be God's people?

"I hope this will fit together for you this morning, and I hope

the Holy Spirit will somehow impress upon you the day and age that we live in, and how important it is for us to make a choice. Are we going to be God's people or are we just going to keep putting that off? There are some things that He wants us to do for Him. I am convinced of that as I stand here today. There are some things that He wants us to do but we can't do them except by His power. We can't have His power though unless we make certain choices in our lives. It says that He cannot dwell in unholy or unclean temples. That is true. He can't do that. I brought some little examples, I hope, to illustrate what it means to take time to make sure we are connected to God and his power. It is kind of for the kids but everybody can listen in.

"I see Isabelle (Jordison) back there. This might not mean anything to the rest of you, but she might catch what I am talking about. Isabelle and I have had this little thing going about Pippi Longstocking, and I have started calling Pippi Longstocking, who she claims is one of her favorite people, the Pink Pest. Well, there are other Pink Pests I can think of. How many have seen the commercial on TV about the Ever Ready battery; the little rabbit that goes forever? I guess it is the Energizer Bunny. That's another Pink Pest, Isabelle. The reason that I bring it up this morning is because too many of us, I think, somehow feel that we can do what needs to be done on our own. We just keep going and going and trying to do what we need to do without really tapping into the power that God is willing to share with us.

Only the Lord can recharge us

"As I said earlier, I brought a couple of things with me this morning. One of the things we need to be doing as God's people is communicating with those around us. We need to somehow share with those around us a lot of things and it isn't always in words. For an example this morning, I brought my cell phone. The cell phone has been a marvelous thing in a way. It's probably been a really bad thing in another way, but it does allow us to communicate. However, that is only as long as the phone will power up. Mine is turned off by the way. Unfortunately, sometimes I think that is the way I am with the Lord. You know every few days if I don't plug the phone in and recharge it, it is worthless. I think it is the same way with us in our relationship with the Lord. We have to rely upon the Lord to recharge us, but if we aren't connected with Him so that He can recharge us, it won't be long until we are of no use to those around us. That is at least one of my concerns every day. If I am not in touch with the Spirit, I am of no use to those around. So if I am not praying, fasting, studying and obeying His word, how can I hope to be of any use in the Lord's hands for the purposes of those around me?

"I brought another little thing for the kids, well actually two things. (He holds up a big flashlight.) You know we are suppose to be a light to the world, and our ability to be that light depends on the power of God. It is not dependent upon our own power. However, it does have something to do with our own choices; whether we are going to choose to do that which is right or that which is wrong.

"I brought two flashlights, and I will tell you why in a minute. Can you see that Sam (Jordison)? I turned it on but nothing is happening. Do you suppose it has a dead battery? It could be there is no battery at all or the connection isn't good. If we applied this to our own lives it could mean we don't have the Lord in our life at all, or it could be that we have had Him, but we aren't taking care to do the things we need to do so we've run down. There might be something we really need to take out of our life, we need to get rid of it because it is standing in the way of our ability to hear and follow the Lord. (Sherman then takes a piece of paper out of the flashlight that kept the battery from making the right connection). We can kind of smile about that example, but I think for me anyhow there are things in my life that I really need to remove. If I don't I just can't ever be what the Lord called me to be.

"Now here is another light, Sam. I won't point this at anybody (pulls out a very large light), because this one is bright. You know what? If I take this and set it on the shelf at home and don't keep it plugged in so it can be recharging, it will die. If I don't keep it plugged in so it can be recharging, it won't provide any light either. That's my concern this morning that we have all these promises

and all this power that is available to those who will serve the Lord but how much time are we willing to spend to be recharged, to be plugged in and to be connected with the source of that power.

“Now when I look around the room this morning, I see a bunch of really good people. It’s kind of like preaching to the choir. But even so I am willing to bet that every one of us has something that we need to get out of our lives so that we make a better connection with the power of the Lord and with the Holy Spirit. We need to be taking more time than we do to be recharged. Part of what I am trying to convey here is that it’s not just a matter of going off by ourselves and trying to regenerate. It’s a matter of connecting with the real source of power that is outside of ourselves, recognizing that God and God alone can accomplish those things that have to be accomplished and that Zion is His to give as are these other gifts that I have briefly made reference to.

“I don’t know how to say what I want to say. Let me ask you this question. Who besides God promises us anything of eternal value? You know I talked about these flashlights and the cell phone and there are other things we could talk about. If we don’t keep them plugged in and charged, what happens, Sam? Sam replied, “They die.” That’s exactly right and that’s what will happen to us if we are not taking the time in our lives to be connected to the Holy Spirit, to be open to the teachings and the direction of God. We will die and it will not be the physical death that I am concerned about, obviously, because Christ has already paid the price for that death, and we will be resurrected. It is the spiritual death that should cause us great concern. I want to read a few more scriptures this morning, and I hope as you listen to these scriptures, you will hear God calling you; that you will hear Him promising you that He’s going to do what He said He would do; that He wants us to a part of it and that it is important for us today even to choose to be a part of His work. If we don’t choose to be a part of His work, then nothing about us will be of worth to His people. He can only use us if we exercise our agency to choose righteousness.

“I will try to read these so that you can listen and get something out of them. Of course, that will only happen if the Spirit moves in you.” ‘Arise, shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light.’ (“I went ahead and read that part because, of course, these words are to His people, and as Gentiles we have the opportunity to be a part of His people if we will repent and humble ourselves and obey His word. But these words are to His people”). ‘For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee’ (speaking of His people) shall perish; ye those nations shall be utterly wasted. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. . . . and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.’ “Could that be said of us? Would God refer to us as trees of righteousness; those that He has planted? Are we growing for the purpose for which He planted us?” ‘. . . the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. . . . ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence.’ “That is to us too, I think. Inasmuch as we claim to be God’s people, we should be that light

to the world, but we can only do that by His power.” ‘. . . thou, O lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.’

“This is the Lord, then again speaking to His people.” ‘I am found of them who seek after me, I give unto all them that ask of me; I am not found of them that sought me not, or that inquireth not after me. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat’ (He is speaking to those who reject Him) ‘but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.’ “Which of these sounds like what we want? Do we want to be those who are fed by the Lord, those who drink when we’re thirsty? Do we want to be those who rejoice, who have joy of heart, or do we want to be those who hunger and thirst and are ashamed and howl for vexation of spirit? The choice is ours.

“Then He goes on and says,” ‘. . . behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create . . . mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands . . . before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.’ (parts of Isaiah 60, 61, 63, 64 and 65)

The time to choose is quickly disappearing

“I hope I haven’t stood in the road of that which you needed to hear this morning. I hope that you did hear that the Lord wants us to be His people, but He leaves it up to us to choose. However, the time to choose is quickly disappearing. However, inasmuch as we choose to be His people, to humble ourselves and repent, to learn to pray, fast, study and look to Him, and not waste our time with the useless things of this world, but to listen to His voice, then He will accomplish with us what He sent us into the world to accomplish. That doesn’t always mean, like I said earlier, going out and doing some magnificent thing that everybody is going to see. In fact, it probably does not mean that because the goal is not to bring attention to ourselves, either individually or collectively, the goal is to get people to look to God. You know one of the things we could do today is to pray for Erin Cornish as Valle asked us to do earlier. (Erin had called Alan and Valle Sunday morning to tell them that their car had been broken into. Her scripture bag was taken which had in it a testimony journal that she had been keeping since she was in grade school. She wanted us to pray that she would either get the journal back, or that it would bless the life of whoever took it.) I wonder how many of us will go home and remember to do that? Erin can receive what she needs to receive if we support her. If we are joined together and are one in heart and mind, she can have what she needs. The Lord knows what that is, whether it is the return of that which she has lost or whether it is the casting of the bread on the waters. We could go around the room here today, and talk about each one and the special gifts and needs that you have. The Lord wants us somehow to become of one heart and one mind so that He can do His work in us.

We have to learn to love one another

“There is one other little thing that I will mention, and then I am going to sit down. I hope the power of the Lord allowed you to hear what was in the scriptures I read earlier. They meant something to me as I read them last night. The other thing that I was impressed with as I was trying to prepare for this morning was that if we don’t have charity, we are nothing. We have to learn to love one another. We have to learn to love them enough that we will change the way we live. I know I have mentioned this before too, but you know the scripture that says, ‘no greater love hath any man than that he lay down his life for his brother.’ I don’t think that was just talking about going out and getting shot for your brother. I think it meant are we willing to adjust the way we live day to day, moment to moment so that those around us can be blessed by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

News and Notes

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Woman to Woman Conference

Seven women from our congregation traveled to Colbern Road Restoration Branch on Saturday, November 10th for the Woman to Woman Conference. Linda Guin was in charge of the activities for the day which were centered around the theme of Rosie the Riveter and the work that women did during World War II when so many men were drafted to serve in the armed forces. Shellie Guin was the navigator for the day and introduced the speakers as well as offered prayer before each session began. Classes were taught by Jean Robinson, who had actually worked as a Rosie the Riveter; Pat Chadwick, Sue Manning and Dayne Cederstrom. A group of 8 young women offered the gift of music between speakers dressed in various costumes from Rosie the Riveter clothes to dress clothes that might have been worn in the 1940's. The lunch that was served consisted of foods that were eaten in the 1940's. The day was well spent in learning and fellowship.

Congregational Movie Night

On Sunday night, November 11, nineteen members met at Ron and Di Smith's home for movie night. Each family brought snack foods to eat during the movie. We watched the movie, The Treasure Seekers by Edith Nesbit. It was about a family of four children and their father who was an inventor. The family was having financial difficulties which each child tried to help solve in his/her way. There were some funny moments in the movie and a few scary ones. Everyone seemed to enjoy not only the movie and the fellowship but also the food.

Poem read by George Knotts

This poem was read by George Knotts at the Wednesday prayer service on November 14. He felt that the thoughts represented in the poem were ones that might help to guide us each day in our service to the Lord.

Lead me to some soul today.
Teach me, Lord, just what to say.
Friends of mine are lost in sin
And cannot find the way.

Few there are who seem to care,
Few there are who pray.
Melt my heart and fill my life-
Give me one soul today.

Congregation Thanksgiving Dinner

Approximately 50 people attended the congregation's Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday, November 18. Tables of traditional Thanksgiving food were lined up in the main room of the church. Members were seated at tables beautifully decorated with Pilgrims and other Thanksgiving items. Gordon Winkler blessed the food. Plates were filled with all the delicious foods that had been prepared. Thank you to all the hands that prepared this feast, to Cheryl and Valle for being in charge, to Sue Beck for the beautiful decorations, to those who set up chairs and tables, and to those who cleaned up.

