

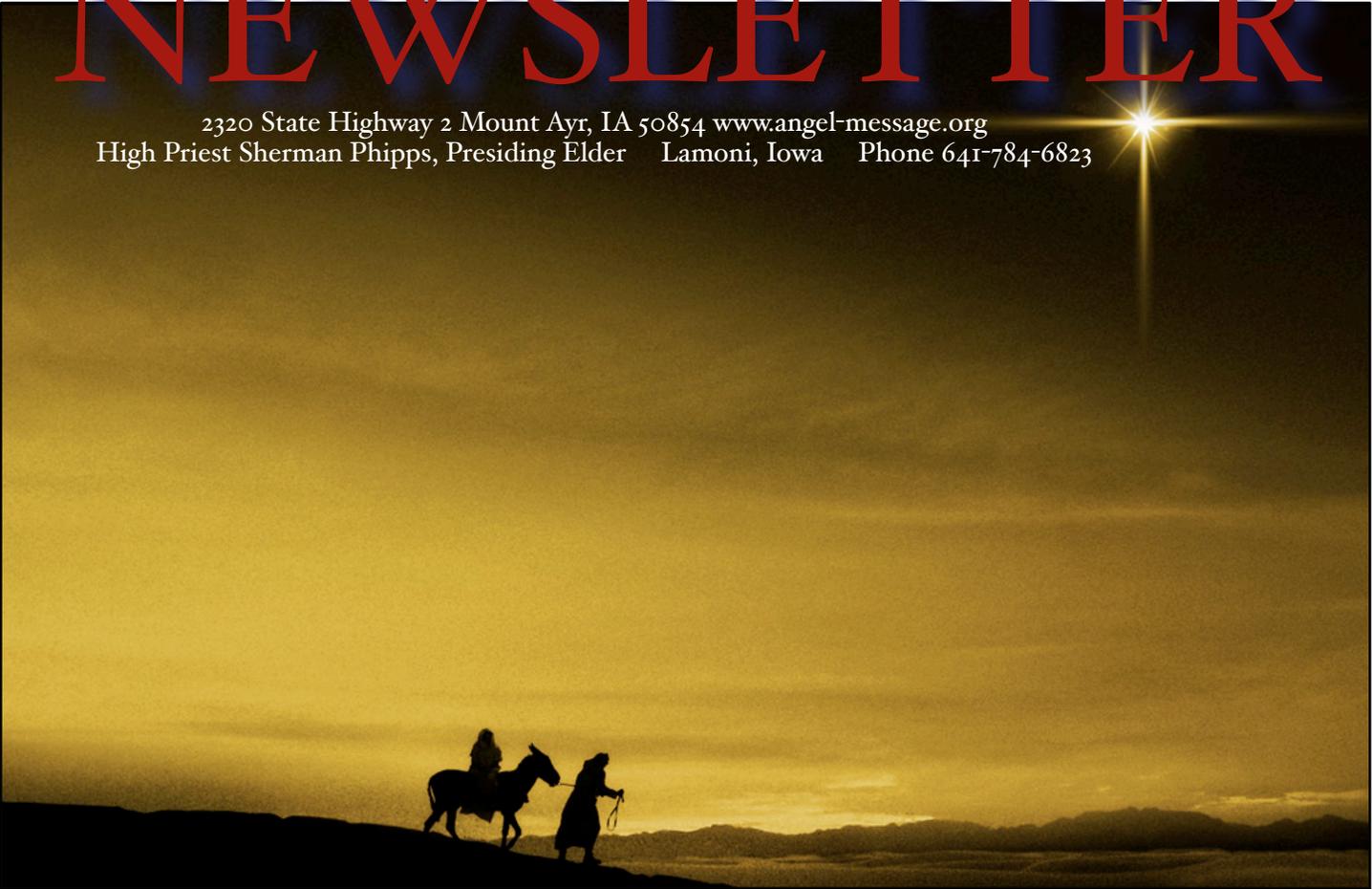


Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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News & Notes

Thanksgiving Dinner

Sixty-two people attended the congregational Thanksgiving Dinner November 21st. Thank you Sue and Jan for helping making the event so wonderful!

Caroling Party

December 12th we'll be gathering at Ron Smith's home in Lamoni at 5:00. We'll caravan to each home and sing carols.

African Christmas

Ron & Di Smith, accompanied by Cara Smith, are headed to Tanzania over the

Christmas Holiday. They will be holding a retreat with Brothers Eric Odida, of Kenya and Paul Makawiti, of Tanzania for the approximate 30 Saints who are gathered there.

New Year's Party

Our New Year's Party will be held at Rob & Lynda Rolfe's home December 31st from 7:30 PM to midnight. Everyone is invited. Bring food, fun and games as we celebrate the New year!



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ARE YOU ON THE RIGHT PATH?



Elder Gordon Winkler
Mt. Ayr, Iowa
November 7, 2010

The Call to Worship, read by Elder Steven Cunningham, was from Ether 1:107-112. *'I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words, will not believe me, that I am; and he that will not believe me, will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world. Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will shew unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief. Come unto me, O ye house of Israel, and it shall be made manifest unto you how great things the Father hath laid up for you, from the foundation of the world; and it hath not come unto you, because of unbelief. Behold, when ye shall rend that vail of unbelief which doth cause you to remain in your awful state of wickedness and hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, then shall the great and marvelous things which have been hid up from the foundation of the world from you; Yea, when ye shall call upon the Father in my name, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then shall ye know that the Father hath remembered the covenant which he made unto your fathers, O house of Israel.'*

Elder Gordon Winkler then began his sermon, "In the adult class this morning we were talking about spiritual gifts and miracles, speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues. My prayer for

this morning is that at a minimum the Spirit will enter your heart and your life as a gift and the miracle will be that we can see God shining through your life as individuals here today.

"I am going to begin this morning by sharing with you a medley of scriptures from the Book of Psalms. *'Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.'* (Psalms 16:11) *'Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.'* (Psalms 17:5) *'He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.'* (Psalms 23:3) *'Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.'* (Psalms 25:4) *'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.'* (Psalms 25:10) And finally, *'Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path . . .'* (Psalms 27:11) I think you can gather by those scriptures that I want to talk this morning about the path. In fact, I had left a message for Steven that I would appreciate it if he could use the song, "The Old, Old Path" in our worship this morning. I appreciate the opportunity to sing that and to hear each of you singing.

"You know the Communion Service to me is really a time of introspection. It's a time to engage in an examination of ourselves. It's a time to look at how we are doing and what path we are on. Am I in the right path? Am I on the path that leads to eternal life? Do I have the strength and the endurance to make it to the end? Do I need to be carried or can I help to carry someone else so that we can all reach that path that leads to eternal life?"

"I spend a fair amount of time on the road back and forth to Des Moines for meetings. Last week I had the radio on and it was playing a song that was popular and I enjoyed when I was younger. So, you know that it was on an oldies station. I think probably some of you remember the group called the Hollies? They sang a song called 'He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother.'"

The road is long
With many a winding turn
That leads us to who knows where
Who knows when
But I'm strong
Strong enough to carry him
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

So on we go
His welfare is of my concern
No burden is he to bear
We'll get there
For I know
He would not encumber me
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

If I'm laden at all
I'm laden with sadness
That everyone's heart
Isn't filled with the gladness
Of love for one another

It's a long, long road
From which there is no return
While we're on the way to there
Why not share
And the load
Doesn't weigh me down at all
He ain't heavy, he's my brother

That song really has two themes, at least two that I identified with. The one theme is the notion of a winding road, a long road, a road from which there is no return.

"I thought about my life and you can think about your life while I share just what was the road of my life. I grew up in a community in Michigan called Riverview which is south of Detroit. I was born there, raised there and grew up there. Well maybe born there and raised there, some might not think that I have grown up yet. I graduated in 1975 from high school and really didn't know what I wanted to do. Mom and Dad made it clear that if I didn't continue on in school and I wanted to stay at the house, there would be some rent that I would owe them. I thought no job, no money to pay rent, guess I'll try school again. I enrolled at Wayne State University which is a school in downtown Detroit. I took the bus downtown and went to school for a year which confirmed the same thoughts in my mind that I had when I left high school. I didn't really want to go to school so I got a job in a machine shop as a machine operator. The company that I worked for made prototypes for the automotive industry. We were making spindles, manifold covers and all sorts of parts for an engine and car manufacturing that were five and seven years ahead of when those cars were going to come out on the market. I did that for a year, operating cutting and milling equipment.



My hands were always oiled, dirty and cut up and I thought, 'Boy, I don't think I want to do this for the rest of my life either.'

I decided to try the school thing again. I had been to Graceland College for Sports Spectacular and other things affiliated with the church so I decided to go there. I went to Graceland College for a year, got the notion that maybe I would want to be a pharmacist. I had worked in a community drugstore when I was in high school and so I thought maybe I could be a pharmacist. I transferred from Graceland College to the University of Iowa and started into Pharmacy School there. While I was there I worked at one of the hospital pharmacies, Mercy Hospital on Market Street. The pharmacy by the way was located in the basement of the hospital and so I had no contact with anybody. I spent most of the time on the phone arguing with nurses over doctor's orders. I just didn't see that being something that I could do for the rest of my life. So I was really still lost on this road, not knowing where I was going and what the turns were.

"Well along the way I met a lovely young lady by the name of Linda Barber, and we got married. Then I knew that I really did need to figure out what I was going to do so I set out on a course that led me to Hospital and Health Administration. After graduating from the University of Iowa, I moved to Des Moines and spent a year doing an administrative residency at Mercy Hospital. I then came to Ringgold County in Mount Ayr to take over the position of the Hospital Administrator/CEO. In our plans I thought that we would be in Mount Ayr three to five years. Five turned to seven and now it's been over twenty years that I have been in the community here, sharing in the community and with you people here. Who knows where the path of life might take you or your career path might take you and what that might be. The scriptures talk about another path. They talk about a straight and narrow path so we are going to spend some more time talking about that.

"The second theme that I found in this song was the theme about brother or neighbor and love for one another. You know the book of Luke 10:28 reads, '*...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy*

mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.' I think that's the kind of love that's being talked about in that song. As we travel along the road in the straight and narrow path, we need to be thinking about the love that we have for our neighbors, for our friends, for our brothers so that we can get us all on the same path.

"You notice in that scripture from Luke it didn't say that you were to acknowledge your neighbor or your brother. It didn't say that you were to tolerate your neighbor and brother. It didn't say you were supposed to be a critic of your neighbor and brother. It didn't even say you're just supposed to like your neighbor and brother. It said that you were supposed to love your neighbor and brother.

"This morning I would like to talk about two accounts that are found in the scriptures. One is found in the Old Testament of the Bible. It's provided by the prophet Jeremiah. The second account I would like to talk about is Lehi's vision and Nephi's vision. Nephi asked and received the same vision. This morning I ask the question are you on the right road? Are you on the right path? You may be on the right road or path or you may be on the wrong road or path. What determines if you are on the right road? Is it how many other people are on the same road that you're on? Is that how you know you are on the right road?

"I said I grew up in suburban Detroit. You know rush hour traffic coming into the city had a lot of people on it. In fact I remember one of the radio announcers who gave the traffic report in the morning talking about the 'parking lot' moving at a

that leads you to the right destination. You are on the wrong road if it takes you to the wrong destination.

"The truth today is you and I are traveling on some road right now. Are we on the road that takes us to the right destination? I am reminded of a phrase that I saw posted in an office. It said, *Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way.* You know I wonder sometimes which I am. Am I helping to lead? Am I a good follower or am I just in the way? If I am just in the way I hope somebody pushes me out so that the rest of you can get on towards the destination that is in front of us all.

"Some claim that they are on the right path just because they participate in religious rituals. Some claim that they are on the right path because their parents had them blessed or christened as a child. Some claim that they are on the right path because all good people in all religions will be saved. I don't believe any of those are the criteria that's going to determine whether or not you are on the right path. Many are on the wrong path. In Isaiah 59:7-8 it says, '*Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings; they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.*' We don't always recognize crooked paths. Some are subtle with a gradual long turn to them and not all are as dramatic as shedding innocent blood but we need to be on the lookout for crooked paths because the end result is

"...if we intend to spend everlasting life with God, the Father, and Jesus, His Son, we need to find our way back to the straight path."

certain speed. That was his reference to how many people were on those roads. Maybe the road you are on is more like Ringgold County Road P68. There's not too many people on that road. Maybe what determines if you are on the right road or path is how nice the scenery is. Is that how you determine if you are on the right path if the scenery looks good? Or maybe it's how easy the travel is. If it's a smooth road with not many people on it maybe that's the right path. No, that isn't how you determine what is the right path or the right road. The right path is the one

that all crooked paths are the same. They lead to a place where there's no peace.

"Doctrine and Covenants Section 2 begins with, '*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...*' (D & C 2:1a) So if you are on a crooked path right now, you are not on the path with God. '*...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. Remember,*



remember, that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men.' (2:1b-2a) So if you are on a crooked path again, God is not there. Do you think you are on the right path? Are you on the right road?

"Our presence here this morning should suggest that we are. At least we know the right path. Even so we must be careful because according to the scriptures, *'There is a way that seems right to man but its end is the way of death.'* (Proverbs 16:25) Also in Proverbs 21:2 it says, *'Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts.'* Jeremiah prayed, *'O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.'* (Jeremiah 10:23) We need guidance from God and as a loving Father He is willing to provide it.

The text that I want to talk about next is from the book of Jeremiah in the 6th chapter. Jeremiah was a prophet of God in the land of Judah. Judah had turned away from God and was not pleasing in His sight so Jeremiah was sent to try and admonish the people and bring them back to God. Let me read to you starting at verse 13, *'For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest everyone dealeth falsely.'* That describes the nature of what's going on in Judah. *'They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall; at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them.'* (Jeremiah 6:14-18) He goes on to say that there are going to be stumbling blocks put in their places. There's going to be cruel things that happen to them. That His mercy won't go with them and all this because they had given up and were not asking for the old paths.

"You know we sing a number of songs that came to my mind as I was thinking about the old paths. How many of you remember the song, 'Give me that old time religion, it's good enough for _____' (and you fill in the name). We sang this morning, 'The Old, Old Path', and I remember another song that we sing that says, 'I have found the glorious gospel that was taught in former years.' While many of us here hold dear to the message of those great old hymns, there is a shift today that finds us heading in different directions. I would like to quote a gentleman by the name of Sonny Thomas who wrote these words in a religious article, *'Religion today shouts of tolerance. Religion today is geared more for entertainment. Religion today seeks to deal with individuals more on a social level than on a spiritual one. Religion today as vast as it is in style offers little substance to change the hearts of a sin sick generation.'* Do you agree with that?

"As we look at the passages from Jeremiah we are reminded of a time in Israel's history which is very similar to our day. We find Israel had become lazy and complacent in their devotion to God. They sought prophets who would tickle their ears and tell them that all was well. They simply were seeking those who would tell them what they wanted to hear. We find that commonplace today. The Apostle Paul warned us in his second letter to Timothy. (2nd Timothy 4:2-3) He begins by saying, *'Preach the word...'* and then he states, *'For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.'* Israel had already done this. They had appointed ministers who had blown the trumpet but the scriptures tell us that they would not harken to the sound of that warning. For this reason Jeremiah prophesied that this was God's judgment on Israel. Even though judgment is on the horizon true to His loving nature, God provides counsel to Israel. He gives them directions on how to right the ship. He likens his directions to a traveler standing in a fork in the road, attempting to decide which direction he should take. God gives clear instructions to Israel that they should take the old paths; the old paths of godliness and righteousness wherein God would bless and prosper them. Once chosen Israel was to walk in them. In other words they were to make practical

applications of their decisions and their everyday lives. But Israel refused. They would not harken.

"So what do we need to do to get back into the old paths in our lives, in our homes and in our church? What can we do to assure that God's judgment doesn't fall on us as it did on Israel? In the world today if you were to look at religion, it is a religion of tolerance. We must tolerate every wind of doctrine, every new fad, and every new way. We must conclude that one way is just as beneficial as another. We must conclude that the different religions are only different ways of serving and worshiping the same God. We must conclude that all ways must lead to the same end. Even in our own doctrinal teachings for the so called sake of unity, we must agree to disagree. I don't think this was God's design at all. In John 14:6, Jesus states, *'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'* There is no other way. He didn't state that He was one of the many ways. He stated emphatically that He was the way. We must reclaim the old paths. In Ephesians 4:14 it says, *'That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.'* The Apostle Paul told Timothy to give attendance, to reading, to exhortation and to doctrine. Doctrine is the foundation of belief. Wrong doctrine equals wrong ideals and worldwide views. We must reclaim the old paths of doctrine.

"The Book of Mormon has a story of Lehi's vision and Nephi's vision, the same as his father Lehi. I want to refresh our memories concerning this vision. I think it's important. I think about it in the context that Lehi was a father and was concerned about his family, his children, his sons. He spoke to the Lord and the Lord gave him a dream or vision. In that vision he beheld a tree whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. Isn't that what every father would want for his children. As he partook of the fruit it filled his soul with exceeding great joy and he began to desire that his family should partake of it also. In his vision he looked about and there was a river of water and along that river of water was a rod of iron and along that rod of iron ran a straight and narrow path. I'll read just that portion. *'And I also beheld a straight*



and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood; And it also led by the head of the fountain unto a large and spacious field, as if it had been a world; And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood. And it came to pass that they did come forth and commence in the path which led to the tree.' (1 Nephi 2:63-68) Inasmuch as they who had commenced in the path lost their way, they had wandered off and were lost.

"The story talks about a group of people that started out in the path, but they lost their way. It also talks about a group of people that followed the path, tasted of the fruit but then became ashamed because they were scoffed at by others and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost. Then it talks about a group of people who are just wandering around in strange roads and are lost. Lehi with the love of a father exhorted *'them then with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that, perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them, and not cast them off; Yea, my father did preach unto them.'* (1 Nephi 2:88-89)

"Nephi just a few pages later in the account prays to God and tells Him that he desires to have that vision for himself. The Spirit said to him that he would grant him that vision. So Nephi goes through the vision of his father and then says that the Spirit asked him what he desired now. He said, *'...To know the interpretation thereof'* (1 Nephi 3:49) The Spirit then asked Nephi *'Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?'* (1 Nephi 3:63) Nephi answered that it was the love of God, and the rod of iron was the word of God. I think we also need to be aware of the fact that *'...the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they may perish, and are lost.'* (1 Nephi 3:125)

"I think the important message for us today is that if we intend to spend everlasting life with God, the Father, and Jesus, His Son, we need to find our way back to the straight path. I think it is clear through the account I shared and over history that whenever God's people were struggling and wavering, His message was always remember the old path. I pray

today as we leave here and as we struggle through the long and winding road of life that we can find the straight and narrow path that will lead us back to God because that is the path that God wishes each one of us to be on.



CHRIST CAME TO SAVE THE LOST



Seventy Rex Curtis
Sibley, Missouri

November 14, 2010

As a Call to Worship, High Priest Sherman Phipps read the following, *'wherefore, as ye are agents, and ye are on the Lord's errand; and whatever ye do according to the will of the Lord, is the Lord's business...'* (D & C 64:6b) *'but all things must come to pass in their time; wherefore be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great. Behold, the Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind; and the willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land of Zion in these last days;'* (D & C 64:6c, 7a)

"I guess I just kind of assumed that everybody knew Brother Rex, but maybe not. I thought maybe I should take a second to introduce him. I'm really, really happy to have Seventy Rex Curtis here this morning. I've set under his ministry before and always appreciated it. I am also glad to have his wife Penny with us. I think you will be blessed for being here this

morning. Not because Brother Rex is above other humans, but because he is open to the working of the Spirit and that's what we want."

Brother Curtis then began his message, "I hate when they build you up like that. There's only one place to go from there. I bring greetings from the people of Zarahemla [Branch]. Of course, not down in the narrow neck of land that we talked about in Sunday School, but 100 or so miles south of here. They all wish you well. We had our Thanksgiving Dinner last night which is why we didn't come up last night to be with you. Maybe we should have come next week when you are having your Thanksgiving Dinner. We could have had three or four of them this year.

"I appreciated the song you sang, sister [JulieAnn Smith], about the ancient words that we read. I like the ancient words that come from the old Jerusalem gospel. I love the words that Jesus spoke to His disciples and the stories and parables He shared. I am going to share some of those today as we talk about some things. I would like to open with a scripture. It's interesting how even though we are all part of the same body and the same church, different branches have a different way of going through their service.

"That makes me remember a story my grandpa used to tell. He came from Missouri. We lived out in Southern California. I grew up in San Diego. My dad went into the Navy during the Korean War and we ended up staying there. Grandma and Grandpa would come out to visit us. Actually by then they lived in Oregon. We would sit around the dinner table Sunday afternoons or whenever they might be there, and he would share this story about this minister who used to travel a lot. Every Sunday the minister would be invited to someone's house for dinner. (If my daughters were here they would be shaking their heads like Penny is right now having heard this story many times before.) Every Sunday he would have fried chicken. He was at this small congregation sharing with the folks and after the service the people were greeting him. A farmer came up to him and asked the minister to come to his house for dinner. The minister got there and sure enough there was a big old heaping platter of fried chicken right in the middle of the table. He thought, 'Boy chicken again.'



He sat and started talking and eating. He found that he couldn't stop eating this chicken. It was the best chicken that he had ever eaten. He said, 'I can't believe this. I eat chicken every Sunday but this might be the best chicken I've ever had. The farmer said, 'Eat all you want. They're dying quicker than we can eat them any way.'



"I don't know if this is the best way to start a sermon but it sure breaks the ice a little bit. That's the kind of humor I grew up with around our dinner table. It seems like we were blessed to have ministers throughout our family lineage and they always shared some of their best.

"I'd like you to listen to the words from the 15th chapter of Luke:4-6. *'What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the wilderness after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, and saith unto them, Rejoice with me; for I found my sheep which was lost.'* This is an interesting parable that Jesus used to share concerning the household of Israel. It says that He would come for those who were lost.

"You know, we think of things that are lost. We all have a different concept of that. Is something 'lost' that we never had or is something 'lost' like our keys or our wallet. I am good at leaving my wallet or keys somewhere and thinking that I have lost them. It is just kind of temporarily displaced, maybe. Jesus was speaking of something else. It was something that He had and then something that went away and then something that He found. I am going to kind of explore this and see how this relates to some of our lives in this modern day and even within our very lives as we go through them.

"Jesus used this statement differently than we probably would. In Matthew 18:11, He makes this statement, *'For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost, and to call sinners to repentance;...'* Jesus believed that those who hadn't repented or who had repented and then maybe had fallen away were again lost. It is interesting that He uses the term 'lost.' I remember a show that I used to watch when I was just a little boy called 'Lost in Space.' Some of you may remember that show which was one of my favorites. I

loved Will Robinson. You know they left the earth and were out in space and couldn't find their way back. They were lost to the blessings of earth. Maybe that's not the way we think about this but there are those who are maybe lost on a desert island. I liked the show 'Lost' and my wife hated it. They were being zapped from one spot to another in time. It was a crazy show to keep track of but they were lost. Or, were they really lost?

"I remember a testimony from Brother Rick Kohn that he shared the night before we ordained him to be an elder. Now he is a Seventy who lives in Chicago. His testimony was that he was one of the lost sheep of the RLDS Church who now had found his way back out of the weeds. As I ordained him I was enlightened in my mind to tell him that he needed to go and seek out other lost sheep of the household of Israel and bring them back to their Savior. Rick is doing a fine job all alone in Chicago. One other thought about that. You know we've had family members, maybe some of you have family that you felt were lost, maybe a wife or husband or son or daughter. Jesus said He came to save all those who were lost. So as we go through this time together, maybe we can think about loved ones. It might just be some friends that we feel have lost their way. Jesus said we can come and find them and save those who were lost.

"I believe Jesus used three kinds of ministry in His time here on earth. He had the teaching ministry, the preaching ministry and the healing ministry. Of course He performed miracles also. He asked the disciples to share the same way He did. Remember when He said, 'When you're converted strengthen your brethren.' I believe we need that today. He said that to Peter after Peter was with him side by side for two or three years. 'Peter, when you're converted strengthen your brethren.' I think we could follow those words of counsel today, that when we become converted we could strengthen the brethren.

"Healing of men brought people to Jesus. They seemed to seek Him out. They seemed to say, 'Oh if I could only touch the hem of His garment. Oh, if I could only have the touch of His hand upon me I could be healed.' They were seeking a different message, the message of physical healing. He didn't come so much to physically heal us as to spiritually heal us. It hindered His message because they were

satisfied with the healing. So when He would preach maybe they wouldn't receive so much of that because they were still looking for a miracle. They would always say, 'Show us a sign that Thou art the Son of God.' He never would. He would say, 'You must believe on Him whom the Father has sent.' That's the true miracle, if you would, that God so loved this world and the creation that He has that He sent His son that we might have the opportunity for eternal life. It prevented them from seeing the greater message. Remember the statement that says there are signs for those who follow the Lord, those who seek the Kingdom. Jesus knew that teaching causes men to know and preaching causes men to do. He truly sought those who were lost to come unto Him and to repent and to be baptized.

"I am going to go to Corinthians 4:1-6, *'Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'*

Surely men are lost when they are left to their own ways. There are so many examples in the scriptures. I want to go through a few of those. When man is left to his own thoughts and devices they only serve to bring about his destruction. That's just the shame of it. There are those who have sought the light and the truth that has been hidden by the craftiness of men. I believe that.

"On the way up here we were listening to some gospel radio. I am not going to mention the names of the preachers. We probably listened to three different ones. I was disappointed in their message that God wrote His word fifteen hundred years ago, and He doesn't say any more to man. I thought, 'What kind of message is this?'



and it was going across America, that the word of God was written fifteen hundred to two thousand years ago and God has no more to say to man, no more to reveal to him. Do these folks blind other men and women by their craftiness to say, 'Don't believe any of those other books that might be written claiming to be the word of God.' These people seem to be hearing the gospel and yet so much is hidden from them. As stated in the 2nd letter of Corinthians *'...if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost;...'* [4:3] There may be people that we might know in our own lives who might listen to these preachers and say, 'That's the way it is. I know that to be the truth.' Yet I couldn't help but speak back to the radio, 'But you missed the point!' Penny always is hitting me saying, 'Let them talk. Let me hear.' I got that from my dad. He used to get really upset when he listened to who was speaking on the radio or the TV. We have the fulness of the gospel. We have a fuller understanding revealed to us even in this latter day through the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. Surely Jesus didn't want us to feel that once He had walked the earth and was crucified and ascended to the Father in Heaven that that was it. We find that though. Even as men in His day searched for the truth, searched for Jesus, searched for the Messiah that would come, they thought contrary when He was gone.

"Life without Jesus is a life robbed of insight and power. Do you believe that a life without Jesus is robbed of any insight or power? What power is there in not believing anything or not having your life directed by the Spirit of the Lord? It sure seems that you would be lost, wandering aimlessly, maybe even in that wilderness that we talked about earlier. But we testify that life with Jesus is full of insight and full of power. That the Holy Ghost blesses us and that it leads us and guides us and directs us in our lives. You know God had a plan once He created mankind. He knew the end from the beginning. He had a Son who would implement the plan and come to earth and let Himself be sacrificed. There was a Holy Ghost that would empower man to come to the knowledge of God for the Holy Ghost bears truth of the witness of the Father and the Son. Let's not forget that. We testify that a life with Jesus is a life lived with insight and power.

"I love the stories from the the New Testament. I probably preach 90% of my

sermons from that. Let's go to the story that you might remember where he fed 5000 people. That's a pretty well-known story. The people came and He asked how many loaves and fishes they had. There were actually 5000 men, they didn't count the women and children it says but what happened after that. It must have been a miracle to the people to see this great multitude fed with just a handful of food. When they gathered up the baskets there was more than they started with.

"That was a miracle but the real ministry came in a moment when he told the disciples to get in the boat and go on to the other side and He would meet them there. He sent away the multitude which must have taken awhile to get 5000 plus people to leave and go their way. Then it says that He went on to a hillside and prayed. In the fourth watch of the evening, He noticed that there was a storm brewing and so he thought that maybe He needed to see where His disciples were. The disciples were rowing contrary to the wind the

"Surely men are lost when they are left to their own ways."

scriptures said and were fearing for their lives, and Jesus walks upon the water and meets them. They were all scared and thought that it was a spirit. What did Jesus say? 'Fear not for it is I.' Peter said, 'If it is Thee, Lord, let me come unto you and walk on the water also.' That was a beautiful story. Of course we know what happened to Peter. When he took his eyes off Jesus, he began to sink. The Lord said, 'O thou of little faith. Why did thou doubt?' But Jesus got into the boat, calmed the sea and the winds and immediately they were on the other side. It wasn't until those men in the boat let Jesus into their lives that their fear was taken away. It was the only way for them. They were full of fear and doubts. Even when He walked on the water, they were in fear yet they walked daily with the Master. They must have felt lost out there on that sea.

"Remember the story of the Prodigal Son? He was the younger of the two sons. This is again another story that we all know well. He said to his father, 'Will you divide my part between me and my older brother and I will go my own way?' So he went off with his moneys and whatever he was given by his father, his inheritance if you will, and went and blew it all. His

older brother was mad when he came back. He told his dad, 'He blew all his money on harlots and what not.' The part that was important was that when he had spent all of his inheritance, he had nothing left and was lost and had to go to the people in that country and tell them that he would work for them as long as he could get something to eat. He had to basically slop the pigs and eat the same thing that they did. He finally came to himself and thought that even his father's servants had more than enough to eat. What was he doing there? He said to himself that he knew he had sinned against heaven and his father and he would go to him and just be his servant. When he came home what happened? His father saw him in the distance and went out rejoicing. We don't know how long this young man was gone but his father obviously recognized his son at a far off distance. He ran to him and embraced him. The son said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and you. Let me just be your servant that I might have something to eat.' His father said, 'No, no bring him the best robe and put a ring on his finger and go kill the fatted calf and let us make merry. For my son that was lost is now found.' I see that as a modern day parable. We see it amongst us. We see it in our own families in some way or another. I think the Lord wanted us to understand that. No matter how far away we might drift, or some loved one or friend that we have, there's a way back. What did Jesus tell us? The shepherd put the sheep on his shoulder rejoicing and carried him back.

"God quickens in us the very sense of our need of Him. Does He not? He quickened the need of the disciples. Their need grew out of fear. They knew they needed Him as the waves crashed over the boat. The Prodigal Son's need grew out of want. He knew he needed that which could be supplied by his father. We are no different. Nicodemus came and said, 'Rabbi, I know Thou art come from God because nobody can do the miracles you do. How can a man do these things and what is it that I can do to be a part of the kingdom?' Jesus, of course, answered that what he was searching for he couldn't find unless he was born again. Man must enter the water and have the Spirit to find the kingdom. Here was a master in Israel searching for greater understanding. Jesus said, 'Art thou a master in Israel and know all things. If I tell you earthly things that you don't understand, how can I explain to



you heavenly things that you would understand them?' We must be born again. We come into this world and are contrary to our Heavenly Father as natural man and yet Jesus came and sought for us. It happens to every man in a different way. Everyone has a different way of coming about. Everyone has a different need but we all, after we sense the Spirit, search for a greater spiritual power.

"Men must be willing to make moral adjustments in their lives to have that personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Do you remember when King David said, 'O, Lord, create in me a new heart.' [Psalms 51:10] He recognized that the heart he had and the manner in which he was doing things wasn't going to bring him the joy that he desired, bring him any peace. Create in me a new heart. Have we ever said that to ourselves when we recognize that maybe we're on a little bit contrary path or even straying a little that our heart needs to be renewed to the path of the kingdom? I can see David setting with his armies and looking to the heavens. David was the most repentant person I think in all of scriptures when you read about how many times he felt like he sinned against God. He was constantly asking for forgiveness. Sometimes I feel like Peter and like David. 'Lord, I messed up again. Will you forgive me and create in me a new heart? Change my course here.'

"What happened to Paul on the road to Damascus? He was visited and blinded and left there on the road. He finally got to where he could go and begin to receive the understanding of the Lord. He went to Ananias. What happened to Paul? He had to change his moral values. He had to make a moral adjustment. He had persecuted those who were the Lord's people and now it was time for him to minister to them and bless them.

"Do you remember the story of Zaccheus, a man of small stature, who heard that Jesus was coming into town? I believe it was the town of Jericho. There was such a great multitude that he couldn't see over the crowd to see Jesus. He wanted to see who Jesus was and what He was. Who is this Jesus? He had to climb up a sycamore tree and go out on a limb. You can imagine this little guy looking down on the crowd. As Jesus was passing through the streets, he looked up and said, 'Zaccheus, come down quickly. I must spend the night at your house.' All the

people around said, 'He's going to spend the night with him? He's a sinner. He hangs out with publicans and he's cheated a lot of people out of money. He never gives anything to the poor people in need.' I can imagine the murmuring in the crowd of who Jesus was going to spend His time with. It's an interesting story. I am going to read a little bit of it in Luke 19:5-10. *'And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when the disciples saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by unjust means, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham; For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'* Zaccheus had a change in his moral direction. He had to make an adjustment to receive what the Lord really desired to give him. Salvation had come to his door that day.

"We must take some steps in our search for the Lord. First, we have to recognize our need for Him or of Him just as those who were in the boat who were tossed about. They might have felt that their lives were at an end. There must be a need for us to come to Him. There must be a willingness to make a moral adjustment even as Zaccheus did. We must realize that Jesus is available to each one of us. This is an important thing.

"I had a really neat testimony happen to me when I was probably 15. I think it was one of the last years that we went to reunion in Southern California. We were at Camp Buckhorn in Idyllwild, CA, up in the mountains maybe three to four thousand feet up. It is right below Mt. San Jacinto. This was a San Diego District Reunion and many people from our branch attended. We had probably one of the larger branches in San Diego. The youth hung out together because we were all good friends who attended Zion's League. We were coming back from campfire one night later in the week. We used to have a huge campfire. Everybody at reunion would go to campfire. It was super fun. To get to campfire we had to go by the

Chapel of Pines, which was a beautiful place where we had our prayer and preaching services. It was a stadium effect by the hillside itself with manmade pews and the walls were pine trees. It was gorgeous. Over the rostrum there was a parachute looped up to the trees. I guess this was to keep pine needles from falling on the preacher, but I'm not sure exactly.

"We were coming from the campfire back up to this place where you could go get ice cream, hot dogs, hamburgers and other snacks in the evening but we had to go by the Chapel of the Pines to get there. It was nice because it kind of lit the way a little bit through the woods. As we got near the edge, there were probably 6 or 8 of us walking together, some girls started saying, 'There's an angel,' and another girl would say, 'I see it too.' They took off running toward the rostrum. Another young man or two also saw angels and took off and pretty soon I was standing there by myself. I couldn't see anything they were seeing but on the same row that I was standing on, down the way, the Lord was standing with his arms outstretched. He was made available to me to strengthen my testimony. I think the Lord did that knowing my life from the beginning, that I would need the strength to know that Jesus does live and He does say, 'Come unto me.' I wanted to be held in His arms so bad but what was amazing, none of my friends saw the Lord, and I am sad to say that none of those friends are part of the church anymore. I don't know if it was because they lost their testimony or if it was because of what happened as we grew up. We were just 20 when the church fell apart and that age is when you really need the church. It's easy to be swayed when you are 20 to 21 years old but my testimony was firm. I know, I don't think, I don't have faith, I know that Jesus lives and that He's the Son of God. Just as when Jesus asked Peter, 'Who do men say that I am,' and Peter said, 'Surely thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered him and that was what the church was founded upon. 'Man and flesh haven't revealed this to you but my Father who is in Heaven, and upon this rock (this rock of revelation that you just had that I am the Christ the Son of the Living God) we will build this church and hell shall not prevail against it.'

"Friends, we need to have a strong testimony where tears from your eyes are running down your cheeks when you say,



'This is Christ's church.' He is the key cornerstone. He's available to each and every one of us. I'm not special. I was just given a gift. I was given a gift from God to see His Son. Someday I hope that the Son gives me a gift of seeing the Father. Our testimony needs to be sure. I am sure and I would put my life on it in a heartbeat that I know that Jesus is. He called unto me. Without a doubt in my mind, He was available to me. It's all I can do to try to make myself available to Him that I might go and do what He has called me to do, that I might share that same testimony to people wherever they may be. I might never leave the Continental United States to share my testimony and that's O.K. There are 300,000,000 million people that need to hear it. We have a search for Jesus.

"Another one of my favorite stories happened after He was resurrected. The disciples thought everything was over and decided to head on to their homes. They thought the search was over, but He appeared to two on the road to Emmaus. Do you remember what happened to them? Once He broke the bread and blessed it, their eyes were opened. The veil was taken away and they said, 'Surely when He was speaking our hearts jumped within us.' They were filled with the Spirit because they knew this was the Christ but they didn't really recognize Him at the time. How many times does He come to us and we don't recognize Him.

"Do you remember what Peter said? He was going to go fishing. Do you remember what happened when he went fishing? They were fishing in the boat and heard a voice from the shore that said, 'Children, have you any meat and they answered, No. They were disappointed fisherman. There's nothing worse than spending your time fishing and not catching anything. I know. I spend hours trying to catch a fish with a little fly on the end of a line. He said, 'Cast your net on the other side and you'll have meat.' The net was so heavy they could hardly get it in the boat and they drug it ashore. What did Peter do when He recognized the Lord? He said, the heck with fishing and put on his fisher's coat and was in the water headed to Jesus. This was the same man who had denied Christ three times just days before. He thought surely everything was over. Christ was gone from them. What else could they do? They didn't have the Christ with them anymore. He

was still available to them, as much as He's available to us today. He wasn't dead and buried but He was alive and well, full of life and ready to give life.

"Nearer is He than breathing, nearer is He than hand and foot.' I'm not sure who wrote those words but when I found them I had to write them down. Nearer is He than breathing, nearer is He than hand and foot. Jesus is that close to us and He makes Himself available to us. The greatest experience is coming to know the Christ. We can't come to know the great love of God without coming to know the love of Christ. I believe that. The secret to knowing Christ though is to know love. Remember when He shared the two great commandments? They both dealt with love, love the Father and love one another.

"Some folks wrestle with having to set aside all their sins before they can come to Jesus. I say that is impossible. I say you can remember your sins and repent and come unto the Lord and He will wash you clean, but it would be hard to wait until you were sin-free to come to the Lord, wouldn't it? My goodness, if we had to wait until we were sin-free to come to the Lord, I don't think there would be but 3, 4 or 5 people on earth that would be able to do that. He knows how we are coming. He knows those who are lost, whatever our definition of lost may be. Is it like something we had and we lost and then found or is it something that someone had never heard. Has the gospel been hidden to those who are lost, hidden by the god of this world who blinds men that they might not see the light of God. Some just don't know the power of surrender to Jesus. When we surrender we gain strength for the fight that lies ahead. Surely He wants us to win the battle. Isn't that our commission really to win this battle, to create a kingdom on earth so that the kingdom of heaven may come? We struggle with overcoming. We're not lost. We are temporarily displaced maybe, but we're not lost. We know what we need to do. We just have a hard time getting there but then there are those who are lost to whom the gospel has been hidden. That's our job that they might come to know the gospel and have the strength to meet the fight that's ahead of them.

"I'd like to close with this scripture found in Ephesians 3:14-21, *'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That*

he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.' Might the Lord extend to you in this wonderful Thanksgiving season, the time when we can come together as friends and family, the blessings that come from heaven as we come to know the Christ and have Him available to us.



**THE SIN OF
UNGRATEFUL-
NESS**




High Priest Robert Rolfe
Lamoni, Iowa
 November 21, 2010

"It is really a joy to be with you this morning, and not just because we are celebrating Thanksgiving together as our church family. As we meet on this day, I wonder what you are thankful for. If you are not thankful, you better take a good look at your spiritual life. And more importantly, I hope that each of us are



remembering to thank God for our blessings every day, and not just one day per year. The scripture reading I've chosen for this morning has to do with remembering our God and His blessings to those of His people that remain faithful. The people of Nephi had been involved in many wars with the Lamanites, from whom God had delivered them.

whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage and from captivity and from all other nations under heaven, If they will but serve the God of the land which is Jesus Christ, which hath been manifested by the things we have written."

The fact that this was and is a Christian nation has not been disputed until more recently. The politicians, judges and

precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American People. 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.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this Third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the Eighty-eighth.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln
William H. Seward,
Secretary of State

"The Book of Mormon testifies repeatedly of the principle that God blesses those that keep His commandments and those who do not keep his commandments, are cut off from His presence. It has been that way from Adam, and it will continue to be that way until the Lord Jesus Christ returns to rule over this earth.

"I was intrigued by the idea that Jesus

"The day that we celebrate as "Thanksgiving Day", is more than just a federal holiday. It was based on a Christian belief of thanking God for blessings bestowed."

"This scripture comes from the Book of Alma, 22:19-20, 24:

"And thus we see how merciful and just are all the dealings of the Lord, to the fulfilling of all his words unto the children of men; Yea, we can behold that His words are verified, even at this time, which He spake unto Lehi, saying, 'Blessed art thou and thy children; And they shall be blessed, and inasmuch as they shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land; But remember, inasmuch as they will not keep my commandments, They shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.' ...But behold, there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni...

"Those of you who have or have had children that spent years perfecting their musical abilities can appreciate the ministry brought by the Galusha family [who had just bought the special music f the hour]. It takes a lot of dedication and discipline to be able to do that.

"Today I'm going to be talking about Thanksgiving; how it came about and what our ancestors thought about Christianity. This country is founded on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our fathers and mothers came to this land with the prayer that they would be able to worship their God, and His Son, Jesus Christ. Despite the revisionist history of today, you can find their hopes and dreams in their own words, if you care to look. The course of events on this land did not always go smoothly, but our people did pause from time to time and give thanks to the God of the land for their blessings.

"The day that we celebrate as 'Thanksgiving Day', is more than just a federal holiday. It was based on a Christian belief of thanking God for blessings bestowed. As stated in the first chapter of the Book of Ether, verse 35,

"This is a choice land; And

even the Presidents of our country recognized the nature of our land and government. This is a Christian nation and it was built upon Christian principles. The prophets in both the Bible and Book of Mormon would recite the blessings the Lord had provided for them as a people. I would like to do some of that this morning. (I thank the Wallbuilder's website for some of the information in this sermon.) To start with, I would like us to remember how we started to officially celebrate Thanksgiving Day by reading the Thanksgiving Day Proclamation that established the current holiday."

By the President of the United States of America. A Proclamation.

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. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle or the ship; the axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the



Christ is the God of this land. Is this really true? And if Jesus Christ is the God of this land, what does that mean in respect to our daily lives. If you pay any attention to the news, you probably noticed that our President, on April 6, 2009, (interesting date) was quoted by CNN as saying, "Americans do not consider ourselves a Christian nation." This was not the first time he made such a statement. He said essentially the same thing on July 29, 2007, (CBN News) and on June 22, 2008. (WorldNetDaily) And, I might add, he is not the only one saying our nation is not Christian. The April 6, 2009 statement received little coverage from the American press. It was given in Turkey, to a Muslim nation and Muslim press. Is his assertion true? Does saying something over and over make it true?

"You may be interested that the "Pew Research Center" in a 2009 poll reported that 69% of Americans believed that America was indeed a Christian nation. Considering how much our current history has been revised, it is surprising to me how many Americans still believe America is a Christian nation. What did our fathers and mothers think about the subject over the last few centuries?

"Those who today make the claim that America is not a Christian nation do not define what a Christian nation is, or what that term means to them. A Christian nation is certainly not one in which all citizens are Christians, or that the laws require everyone to adhere to Christian theology, or that all its leaders are Christians. To the contrary, we find in our law and tradition the following principles:

- Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.
- Being a Christian is not a prerequisite for holding public office or engaging in public service.
- All religions have free scope within our borders.

"If being a Christian nation is not based upon the criterion mentioned above, what makes us a Christian nation? What did our forefathers say on this subject. In the words of Supreme Court Justice, David Brewer, (1837-1910) America is, of all nations in the world...mostly called a Christian nation because Christianity has so largely shaped and molded it.

"Think about it saints! The morals of

a people, in every country, come from their religion. Brothers and sisters were permitted to marry among the Egyptians because their gods, Isis and Osiris permitted it. From our Greco-Roman heritage, the people celebrated the drunken rites of Bacchus because he was one of their gods. So, what effect did Christian religion have on the formation and continuance of our society.

"The first Chief Justice of our Supreme Court, John Marshall said, "with us, Christianity and religion are identified. It would be strange, indeed, if with such a people our institutions did not presuppose Christianity and did not often refer to it and exhibit relations with it."

"Since that time several of the Justices of the Supreme Court asserted and reasserted that America was a Christian nation. Some of them are:

"Joseph Story, considered the founder of Harvard Law School, who wrote 3 volumes of commentary on the Constitution of the United States. He said, 'there has never been a period in which the Common Law did not recognize Christianity as lying at its foundations.'

"Earl Warren, who said, 'I believe the entire Bill of Rights came into being because of the knowledge our forefathers had of the Bible and their belief in it...I like to believe we are living today in the Spirit of the Christian religion.'

"In addition to Supreme Court justices, many of the federal courts have repeatedly affirmed America to be a Christian nation.

"Many Jewish leaders also support the view that America is a Christian nation. Among some of these leaders are Jeff Jacoby, Aaron Zellman, Dennis Prager, Don Feder, Michael Medved, Burt Prelutsky, and orthodox Rabbi Daniel Lapin. Rabbi Lapin of the Jewish Policy Center warns, 'Without a vibrant and vital Christianity, America is doomed, and without America, the west is doomed.' Do you agree that without Christianity, America is doomed?

"What have some of our past Presidents said on the subject:

"The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were...the general principles of Christianity.' - John Adams

"The teachings of the Bible are so interwoven and entwined with our whole civic and social life that it would be

literally impossible for us to figure to ourselves what that life would be if these teachings were removed.' - Teddy Roosevelt

"America was born a Christian nation—America was born to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture.' - Woodrow Wilson

"American life is builded, and can alone survive, upon...the fundamental philosophy announced by the Savior nineteen centuries ago.' - Herbert Hoover

"This is a Christian nation.' - Harry Truman

"Let us remember that as a Christian nation...we have a charge and a destiny.' - Richard Nixon

"How about one of those Presidents that historians now tell us were not Christian? Thomas Jefferson was instrumental in establishing weekly Sunday worship services at the U.S. Capitol. (This practice continued through the 19th century). He was also a regular and faithful attendant at those church services. Why did he faithfully attend? He explained to a friend while they were walking to church together:

"No nation has ever existed or been governed without religion. Nor can be. The Christian religion is the best religion that has been given to man and I, as Chief Magistrate of this nation, am bound to give it the sanction of my example.'

"What about Congress itself? Did the House and Senate consider itself to be Christian in nature? Yes they did. In 1856, the House of Representatives declared:

"The great vital and conservative element in our system is the belief of our people in the pure doctrines and divine truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.'

"The U. S. Senate, on March 3, 1863, asked President Lincoln to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation. President Lincoln did so. This is the request made by the Senate:

"Sincerely believing that no people, however great in numbers and resources or however strong in the justice of their cause, can prosper without His favor; and at the same time deploring the national offences [*sic*] which have provoked His righteous judgment, yet encouraged in this day of trouble by the assurances of His word to seek him for succor according to His appointed way through Jesus Christ, the Senate of the United States do hereby request the President of the United States,



by his proclamation, to designate and set apart a day for national prayer and humiliation.'

"If so many Judges and so many of those in the Presidency and Congress considered America a Christian nation for so many years, what has changed. We commonly blame the sitting President for our problems. It was Clinton's fault, or Bush's fault or Obama's fault. I would declare to you this morning, America's problem isn't its President, it is its people! Us! We are responsible for the change. We are responsible because we have tolerated the changes thrust upon us by evil and conspiring men and women. There are probably many things that caused the change, but foremost among them is the loss of the concept of sin. A society that doesn't see anything wrong with killing 50 million babies is not likely to become moral when dealing with same-sex marriage.

"President Lincoln concluded that the Civil War may well have occurred because our nation tolerated slavery. If that is so, will the Almighty stay his hand in fact of the celebration of same-sex marriages. Consider the changes that have occurred in my lifetime for a moment; and we have tolerated every one of them: The acceptance of a philosophy for men that permitted sex without the responsibility of marriage; The advent of the "pill" permitting sex without biological consequences; Cohabitation without marriage came next; Now easily available pornography is here. I'm told Playboy Magazine is ending because of pornography being so easily available on the internet.

"Now those who publicly object are considered bigots; when a few years before they were the leaders of their communities. American society used to strongly believe that adultery, bigamy, polygamy, sodomy and many other "now acceptable" practices were sins and crimes against nature. Now we tolerate just about anything, except those people who consider something intolerable. Christians have now become the group most discriminated against. If we publicly oppose sin, we are hateful, or have a phobia, or are outright bigots. The scriptures give us insight into our problem. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish...' (Proverbs 29:18) and 'In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.' (Judges 21:25) Aren't we in that

condition in America today? Can we not expect God to execute His ancient Decree regarding this land?

"Because of my profession I follow the decisions of the courts. One thing that has changed in recent years is the concept of substituting "freedom of worship" for the term "freedom of religion". Both President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton have used this term. What does "freedom of worship" mean. While at first glance we may not see the difference, but "freedom of worship" is a much narrower view of religious liberties. This view is espoused by many in the International arena, but it is not found in the First Amendment. Under International Law, freedom of worship does not include public worship or public evangelism. Thus we have new laws making it a felony to preach against same-sex marriage in public. We have faith based groups now being required to not consider religion or any profession of faith in their "ministry". Those groups who receive any kind of federal support cannot "discriminate" in hiring or placing persons in leadership positions based on their religious views. In 2009, both houses of Congress introduced a bill entitled "Employment Nondiscrimination Act". This bill would require Christian employers to hire everyone regarding of their sexual orientation. This is only part of the result of viewing the First Amendment as requiring only "freedom of worship", and not "freedom of religion".

"Remember that the wicked are always trying to change the law to permit them to do what they want. In Helaman 3:3-4 is found one sentence that describes the goals of the wicked. Nephi, the son of Helaman found the people so wicked he couldn't stay among them. The account states:

"And seeing the people in a state of awful wickedness and those Gaddianton robbers filling the judgment seats, Having usurped the power and authority of the land, Laying aside the commandments of God and not in the least aright before Him, Doing no justice unto the children of men, Condemning the righteous because of their righteousness, Letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; And moreover, to be held in office at the head of the government to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world; And moreover, that they might the more easy

commit adultery and steal and kill and do according to their own wills—'

"Just for a moment, let me ask you, does God love heterosexuals more than homosexuals? What do you think? Let me tell you, God's word was not declared to ruin our fun. He knows what makes us happy and what destroys us. Remember, God condemns heterosexuals if they do not keep his commandments. Jacob 2:32-33 says, '*...For they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms because of the things which were written concerning David and Solomon his son. Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before Me!, said the Lord*'. There are homosexuals who excuse their immoral conduct by claiming, "I was made this way". Does this excuse also apply to heterosexuals? God's word is clear. It is not our "orientation" that is the problem. It is our conduct that condemns us. That is why God called David and Solomon's conduct abominable.

"I would like to discuss one more sin before we have our feast. That sin is the sin of ungratefulness. What can you do about a child that is ungrateful. If one of our children violates a rule, the child can be punished. What if they follow the rule, but have no gratitude. How do we handle that? Do we spank them until they are grateful? Do we recite a long list of the things we have done for them? Do we just order them to be grateful? Being ungrateful is acting like a hog under a tree eating acorns, but never looking up to see where they come from.

"What about our attitude to God? If we follow his commandments simply to avoid punishment, but have no gratitude for his blessings, what manner of people are we? For the children in all of us, I would, on this day we celebrate Thanksgiving as a church family, read you a story about an "ungrateful tiger"

"A long time ago, high in the mountains, the people of a small village came together to decide what to do about tigers wandering near their home. 'We have to do something! With all these tigers wandering around we're too scared to go out of the village' said one man. 'Yes! we have to do something. Last week a tiger ate one of my legs' said another, pointing to his leg that was not there.

"After much talking the villagers decided the best thing to do was to dig deep holes to trap the tigers. Everyone



helped, including the bigger children and the man whose leg was not there. They dug deep holes near all the tracks leading to the village. A few days later a young man came to visit his uncle and heard loud howling sounds as he walked along a track to the village. 'What's making all that noise?' he asked. 'Whatever it is it doesn't sound very happy.' The young man followed the howling sounds until he saw a deep hole with a tiger in it. The tiger tried to jump out and each time he fell back and howled.

"Hello Mr. Tiger' said the young man. 'How did you get down there?' 'I don't know' cried the tiger. 'I was walking along in the forest as tigers do, looking for something to eat, when suddenly I fell into this deep hole.' The tiger pleaded with the young man to help him. 'Please, please help me get out of here. My wife and children will be worried about me. If you help me I'll be very grateful.'

"The young man was a very kind person. He found a large tree branch that had fallen on the ground and pushed and pulled it to the side of the deep hole. 'Watch out Mr. Tiger' yelled the young man as he pushed it down inside. The tiger sprang up the branch and out of the deep hole. 'Ah! that's better' said the tiger pleased to be free.

"The young man felt suddenly very nervous, standing next to the large tiger and decided to leave. 'I must be going now. Good-bye Mr. Tiger' he said. 'Not so fast,' said the tiger. 'I'm going to eat you.' 'But, but, you said you'd be grateful if I helped you' stammered the young man. 'I am grateful' said the tiger. 'But it was humans who dug that hole to trap me and since you're a human I am going to eat you.' 'That's not fair' cried the young man. 'I'm a tiger and that's what tigers do. Eat people' growled the tiger. 'I helped you and now you're going to eat me just because I'm human' said the young man. 'I think we should ask someone else to judge if that's fair or not.'

"The tiger agreed and they went to look for someone to act as a judge. They found an Ox and told him the story. 'I think it's fair for the tiger to eat you' said the Ox. 'Humans treat us Oxen very badly. We're made to work all day and when you want to, you kill us and eat us.' The tiger moved closer to the young man, who quickly yelled 'Let's make it two out of three.' The tiger agreed and they went to ask the biggest tree in the forest. 'I think

it's fair for the tiger to eat you. You humans chop us down whenever you want to and set fire to the forest and burn us.'

"The tiger looked pleased and showed his big teeth as he smiled at the young man. The young man was so frightened his legs began to shake. He saw a hare hopping along. 'Please Mr. Hare, help judge if Mr. Tiger should eat me.' The hare listened to their story then said 'Before I can judge I must see exactly what happened.' They all went to the deep hole where the young man had rescued the tiger. 'Now show me exactly where you were' the hare said to the tiger. Anxious to hurry up and eat the young man, the tiger jumped down into the hole. 'Was this branch in the hole?' asked the hare. 'No it wasn't' answered the tiger. The young man and the hare pulled the branch out.

"My judgment is that it's not fair for you to eat the young man' said the hare. 'Just because it was humans who dug the hole doesn't make it fair for you to eat him. You should have been grateful for his help.' The hare hopped away and the young man hurried off to the village leaving the ungrateful tiger howling in the deep hole.

"What do you think God will do for us if we are ungrateful? Will he leave us in the hole... or help us out?"



.....
• *There are many claims as to the identity of the 'wise men' who visited baby Jesus. But perhaps the best one comes not from the Bible, but the Book of Mormon. To uncover clues of this mystery read "The Master's Touch" Vol. II, Ch.17 'Hawaiian Christmas Party Celebrates Christ' by B. Mildred Smith. - To read it online the link is listed on page 18.*



THE PROMISES OF GOD TO THE LAND OF AMERICA



Seventy Ronald Smith
Lamoni, Iowa



November 28, 2010

For a scripture reading Seventy Ron Smith used Ether 1:31-35. *'And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fullness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fullness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity; for behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God, or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fullness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness come, that ye may not bring down the fullness of the wrath of God upon you, as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ who hath been manifested by the things which we have written.'*

"I have a confession to make this



morning so I will start with that. I did not inherit from my mother her appreciation of history, as hard as she tried to get me to appreciate it. I didn't particularly enjoy studying it in school. I did OK as far as grades were concerned because I could remember, at that time, almost anything that I ever read. I could tell you what side of the book it was on and where on the page it was so if I needed to look up anything, I just opened the book and flipped through looking at that one spot until I found it. It wasn't until I got to my current stage in life where things began to slip easily from memory that I developed any appreciation for those who spent their lives garnering wisdom from the ashes of history. I've also got to confess that I haven't made it a practice to read history because I found it too uncertain and tenuous. It seemed like people were making that stuff up. So my grasp of history isn't as it should be. I can do the names of the American presidents up through Johnson because when I was in 5th grade my brother Alan came home from school and used a mnemonic which his teacher had taught them. *'When a joke made me a joker, Van held the poker, the fiery poker—but Long John Grant has got a croaker. How can my rat try winning his crazy helicopter race to England, King John?'* The first letter of each word is the first letter of the President's name, so that saying takes us from Washington, Adams, Jefferson, ...up through Kennedy and Johnson. The last eight presidents I really have trouble with even though I lived through those. I can't always remember who was first. Anyway, I can at least do the first thirty two.

"Having said this I would like to share some thoughts this morning on our wonderful promised land. I would like to share a little bit about our history and our need to thank the Lord especially at this Thanksgiving season for the land that we live in and the opportunities that we have and the fact that this is the land where the Zion of God shall stand. I was prompted

Fun Fact:

Distance from
Mount Ayr, Iowa
to Bethlehem:

6,431 miles or 10,348 kilometers



by Rob's wonderful sermon last week, and I looked up the words of our National Anthem. How many of you sing the Star Spangled Banner when you hear it played before a ballgame? I do that but I only sing the first verse and don't often sing the last verse. How many of you know those words? The last verse says this:

*O! thus be it ever, when freemen
shall stand
Between their loved home and the
war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the
heav'n rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and
preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, when our
cause it is just,
And this be our motto: "In God is
our trust."
And the star-spangled banner in
triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the
home of the brave!*

"The particular part I want to have you notice today is the phrase that says, *'...may the heav'n rescued land Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation.'* We don't always stop to thank the Lord for the land that we have and the nation that we have. However, after having walked through other lands, having visited other places, I can tell you that this is a very special place to live.

"Last week Rob indicated that our founding fathers believed that it was God Himself who founded this nation and who preserved it through the years. He mentioned Lincoln's Proclamation of Thanksgiving and several other examples. I spent some time this week reading some stuff on the internet and quotes of various people. There are lots of them out there. I would like to just give a couple of examples that illustrate that our founding fathers really did believe that this nation was founded and made by God.

"My first example is a quote from Benjamin Franklin. He's always a good one to quote because people say that he wasn't religious. In a speech at the Constitutional Convention of 1787 he said, *'God governs in the affairs of men, and if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured in the sacred writings that except the Lord build a house, they labor in vain that build it. I firmly believe this. I also believe that*

without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.' Many have said that Benjamin Franklin was not a religious man or a deist or that he did not believe in Jesus Christ. I didn't know exactly what a deist was so I looked that up. It is somebody who believes that God created the world but then left it to its own devices, having nothing to do with day-to-day events and interactions of people. To me the fact that Franklin believed that God had His hand in governing the affairs of men would seem to run contrary to the belief that He is a deist. Other quotes from Franklin seem to run contrary to this view as well.

"On Thursday, June 28, 1787 at the Constitutional Convention, Franklin said, *'In the beginning of the contest with Britain when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard and they were graciously answered. Do we imagine we no longer need His assistance?'* Franklin called for prayer to God because he believed that it was God who was guiding them. In Benjamin Franklin's 1749 plan of education for public schools in Pennsylvania, he insisted that schools teach, *'the excellency of the Christian religion above all others ancient or modern.'* So, he thought we should be teaching Christian religion in our schools and established schools to do that. In 1787 when Franklin helped found the Benjamin Franklin University, it was dedicated as *'a nursery of religion and learning built on Christ the cornerstone.'* Franklin may have expressed some doubts about the divinity of Jesus Christ but Jesus Himself said that if you blaspheme against Him that can be forgiven. It's what you do that counts. I believe that that's true even in this case.

"There are many excellent places on the web where quotes from the founding fathers, Presidents and others indicate what seems to me to be an overwhelming belief that God was involved in the founding of our nation. I'll give one more example. I don't want to spend too much time on what they thought because it's of course what we think that is going to affect how we act. There's an interesting story connected with the aftermath of the 1781 Battle of Yorktown during the Revolutionary War. This was the battle when Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington which really ended the war. Of course, there are all kinds of stories about the hand of God



being involved in being able to cross the river during the night of December 25th with the fog and ice on the river but this isn't that story, this is what happened after the news reached Congress that Washington had defeated Cornwallis.

"I'll quote a source off the internet, 'At an early hour the Congress assembled and with quick beating hearts heard Charles Thompson read the dispatch from Washington.' At its conclusion it was resolved to go in a body to the Lutheran Church at 2 PM and 'return thanks to the Almighty God for crowning the allied armies of the United States and France with success.' A week later that body voted the thanks of the nation and appropriate honors to Washington, Rochambeau and de Grasse with their respective officers and men and appointed the day for a general thanksgiving and prayer throughout the Union on account of God's signal favors to the struggling patriots.

"Isn't it interesting that the first thing the Congress of the United States did was say, OK at 2 o'clock we are going to the church, and we're going to pray and thank God. It took them a week later to thank Washington and the rest of the Generals. I just thought that was pretty appropriate. Of course, along with their thanks to the Generals, they also proclaimed a day of thanksgiving for the country.

"We do live in a land that is blessed by God. This is the promised land of the Book of Mormon. This is the land that is choice above all other lands. The prophecy that I read from Ether this morning is one that emphasizes the blessings and the responsibilities of living in this country. It says that God has decreed that anyone who lives in this land will serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, or they'll be swept off the land. That's a real responsibility and I am going to talk about that a little bit later.

"When I was in Nigeria, people asked lots of questions about the United States. One thing that was really clear from the questions that they were asking was that they considered the United States to be a Christian nation. I have found that true wherever I have gone. Everybody in the world except maybe Americans believes that the United States of America is a Christian nation. They say that the Muslims have Saudi Arabia, the Jews have Israel and the Christians have the United States. That's what America means to them. I believe that we need to understand

that this is the nation that God established so that the gospel could be restored and that Zion could be established in these last days.

"Please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying by this that the U.S. has always done right. I am not saying by this that we can do whatever we please because God is on our side; far from it. On the contrary it's incumbent on us to make the choices and live our lives in accordance with God's will because we have the unique opportunity of living in this land.

"There's a section of the Doctrine and Covenants that was not given by revelation, but it was given to us as a statement of our understanding of the relationship between God's laws and man's laws, between governments on earth and governments in heaven. This is Section 112 and I find it very interesting to read it. It's too long to read the whole thing to you but I commend it to you for your reading if you find that this is of interest at all. I'll read parts of it starting with verse 1 and 2, 'We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man, and that he holds men accountable for their acts in relation to them, either in making laws or administering them, for the good and safety of society. We believe that no government can exist, in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life.' So it is saying that governments are really important here, that we need to have laws that will protect life, liberty and the freedom of our conscience.

"I'll go on, 'We believe that all governments necessarily require civil officers and magistrates to enforce the laws of the same, and that such as will administer the law in equity and justice should be sought for and upheld by the voice of the people (if a republic), or the will of the sovereign. We believe that religion is instituted of God, and that men are amenable to him and to him only for the exercise of it, unless their religious opinion prompts them to infringe upon the rights and liberties of others; but we do not believe that human law has a right to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men, nor dictate forms for public or private devotion; that the civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience; should punish guilt, but never suppress the

freedom of the soul. We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside, while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights by the laws of such governments, and that sedition and rebellion are unbecoming every citizen thus protected, and should be punished accordingly; and that all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest, at the same time, however, holding sacred the freedom of conscience.' (verses 3-5b)

"It goes on to tell about how we don't believe that the government has the right to control the mode of religious service or religious worship and that no religious organization has the right to take property or to take life or those kinds of things. We should go to the government of the land for redress of physical ills and things that happen. I'll read two more verses, 'We do not believe it just to mingle religious influence with civil government, whereby one religious society is fostered and another proscribed in its spiritual privileges, and the individual rights of its members, as citizens, denied. We believe that all religious societies have a right to deal with their members for disorderly conduct according to the rules and regulations of such societies, provided that such dealings be for fellowship and good standing; but we do not believe that any religious society has authority to try men on the right of property or life, to take from them this world's goods, or put them in jeopardy of either life or limb, neither to inflict any physical punishment upon them--they can only excommunicate them from their society and withdraw from their fellowship.' (verses 9-10b)

"There are a couple more pages but it's a very good statement I think for the most part and would certainly be something that we ought to remind ourselves from time to time, and we need to let our children know. Perhaps my delivery of it this morning is not something that is really inspiring for everyone but it's something that I feel strongly about that I know that we need to remember. We need to thank the Lord for the opportunity to live in this kind of condition.

"What can we learn from our history? The prophecy of Ether that I referred to earlier said that we would be wiped off the face of the earth if we ripened in iniquity. We certainly have Noah's flood to indicate



that the Lord is serious about that. We have the Jaredite War which wiped out the Jaredite nation and the Nephite War that wiped out the Nephite nation to indicate that the Lord is serious about that. Of course, everyone knows that it is getting bad out there without my standing here and telling you all of those bad things that are happening. What I was interested in was what does it mean to be ripened in iniquity? Are we there yet? Are we getting close?

“I was reading some of the scriptures about what it means to be ripened in iniquity. There are several in the Book of Mormon that indicate five signs of being ripened in iniquity. The first one is from Alma 8:28, *‘Yea, well did he say, that if the time should come that the voice of this people should choose iniquity; that is, if the time should come that this people should fall into transgression, they would be ripe for destruction.’* So, one of the first signs of ripening in iniquity is not just that there’s iniquity being done but that the voice of the people chooses iniquity. When that happens then you are ripening in iniquity. In Helaman 3:61-64 we find that murders and fornication are specific indicators of ripening in iniquity. *‘And now seeing ye know these things and can not deny them, except ye shall lie, therefore in this ye have sinned, for ye have rejected all these things, notwithstanding so many evidences which ye have received; Yea, even ye have received all things, both things in heaven, and all things which are in the earth, as a witness that they are true. But behold, ye have rejected the truth, and rebelled against your holy God; and even at this time, instead of laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where nothing doth corrupt, and where nothing can come which is unclean, ye are heaping up for yourselves wrath against the day of judgment; Yea, even at this time ye are ripening, because of your murders, and your fornication and wickedness, for everlasting destruction; yea, and except ye repent, it will come unto you soon;’*

“The next one is from Helaman 4:47-52 and this one has to do with pride. That’s a tough one. I don’t have to worry about murdering somebody but I do have to worry about pride and how that affects me. *‘And it came to pass in the eighty and fifth year, they did wax stronger and stronger in their pride, and in their wickedness; and thus they were ripening again for destruction...’* He goes on to tell

us there, *‘And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness, doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him; Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people; yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks, and their herds, and in gold, and in silver, and in all manner of precious things of every kind, and art; Sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies, that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; Yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One; yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceeding great prosperity. And thus we see, that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death, and with terror, and with famine, and with all manner of pestilences, they will not remember him.’*

“Remember September 11th? Remember how many people went to church on September 12th? How many people prayed for the next week. Interesting isn’t it how fast we forget that God has prospered us and taken care of us and protected us. Unless we have those famines and pestilences and awful things happen, we forget our God so we should be thankful even for the bad things, right, because it will help us to remember God.

“The fifth sign of ripening in iniquity is when we cast out the righteous from among us. That is from Helaman 5:18, *‘But behold, the time cometh, saith the Lord, that when ye shall cast out the righteous from among you, then shall ye be ripe for destruction;’* We need to be careful not to cast out the righteous from among us. You’ll have to decide for yourself how ripe we are but considering our society do we hear the voice of the people beginning to choose wickedness? Do you hear of murders and fornication happening? Do you see the lifting of pride in the hearts of the people? Do you see the righteous being cast out?

“So, what do we do? Well, the scriptures give us some advice. One, Jesus said that we need to treasure up His word. He said, *‘And whoso treasureth up my word shall not be deceived.’* (Matthew

24:39) Second, He said that when we see all these terrible things happening that we are to look up and rejoice for the day of our redemption is drawing nigh. (Luke 21:27) We know that there are bad things happening but He said if we will treasure up His word and put it into our lives, it will make a difference in our lives, that’s how you treasure it up. It’s not just taking the books and hiding them in a safe place in your house. He’s talking about treasuring up His words in our hearts. If we put it in our heart and let it make a difference to us, if we don’t do the fornication, if we don’t have pride, if we don’t murder, if we aren’t angry with our brother, if we are humble, if we are doing these things, that’s how we treasure up His word in our lives; that’s how we look up and rejoice because we know that the hour of His coming is nigh.

“In Genesis 9:22 it talks about looking up and embracing the truth because that is the time when Zion and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy. I Thessalonians 5:18 says to give thanks in all things. God still has an interest in your life, in the things that you do each day. He’s willing to help in even the small little ways.

“I have appreciated very much in this congregation as we’ve gathered together on Sunday nights to share some of the stories of God working in our lives. We also do that on Wednesday nights and to some extent in our Sunday mornings. We need to recognize that God is at work in our families and in our lives and that He is reaching out for us. We need to be thankful in all things, even in the hard times, even in the difficult times for this is God’s will concerning us.

“I would like to commend to you today the testimony of our founding fathers that this land is a land of promise and that this nation was brought forth by God for His purpose; that we are alive and part of it because of God’s plan for the world, not just for us, and the salvation of the world and the coming forth of Zion. When we see the signs of our society ripening in iniquity, we need to resolve that (1) we’re not going to be part of that, and (2) that we will look up and rejoice because the time of the Lord is drawing nigh. May God bless you as you consider these things and continue in thanksgiving for the wonderful land in which we live.”





DECEMBER 2010



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Sunday Schedule

DATE	Dec 5	Dec 12	Dec 19	Dec 26	Jan 2
SPEAKING	Priest Jim Barber	Elder Steve Cunningham	Priest Rodney Bastow	Priest Ed Anderson	High Priest Sherman Phipps
PRESIDING	High Priest Rob Rolfe	High Priest Sherman Phipps	Elder Alan Smith	Seventy Ron Smith	High Priest Rob Rolfe
PIANIST	Pat Bolingbroke	Jan Jordison	Pat Bolingbroke	Jan Jordison	Jan Jordison
SPECIAL MUSIC	Sue Beck	Beth Knotts	Lynda Rolfe	Michael Jordison	Alan & Valle Smith
FAMILY DEVOTIONS	Michael Jordisons	Rob Rolfes	Jennifer Rowlands	Alan Smiths	Ron Smiths
GREETERS	Ed Andersons	Jim Barbers	Jan Jordison	Sue Beck	Rodney Bastows
CUSTODIANS	Jennifer Rowlands	Alan Smiths	Ron Smiths	Ed Andersons	Jim Barbers
SUNDAY EVENING	Jennifer Rowland's	Ron Smith's	Steve Smith's	Norman Nelson's	Rob Rolfe's

Wednesday Prayer Service Schedule

DATE	Dec 1	Dec 8	Dec 15	Dec 22	Dec 29	Jan 5
LOCATION	Jan Jordison (Leon)	Norman Nelson (Lamoni)	Rob Rolfe (Lamoni)	Gordon Winkler (Mt. Ayr)	Alan Smith (Mt. Ayr)	Ron Smith (Lamoni)
PRESIDING	Alan Smith	Rodney Bastow	Rob Rolfe	Gordon Winkler	Alan Smith	Ron Smith



Special Events & Activities



Sunday December 5th: Priesthood Meeting at 8:30AM - Potluck following Communion service.

December 5th: Senior Art Exhibition Reception for *Amy Friend* at the Graceland Helene Center from 3-5 PM. Her exhibit is open to the public through December 7th.

December 5th: Advent Tea for women at the Mount Ayr Community of Christ from 2-4 PM.

December 12th: Christmas Caroling Party. We'll meet at Ron Smith's at 5 PM, pile into a few vehicles to carol around Lamoni and then back for soup and fellowship. Dress for being outside.

Wednesday December 15th: Day of Fasting & Prayer

Friday December 31st: New Year's Eve Party at Rob & Lynda Rolfe's, 7:30 PM through Midnight. Bring friends, snack food and games to share.

January: A fasting weekend is being planned for the first part of January. Watch for exact dates.

Birthday's this month: George Galusha, Erika Clisby, Cathy Nelson, Cheryl Phipps, Di Smith, Heidi Winkler, Jennifer Rowland.

Anniversary's: Rod & Debbie Bastow (12/27)



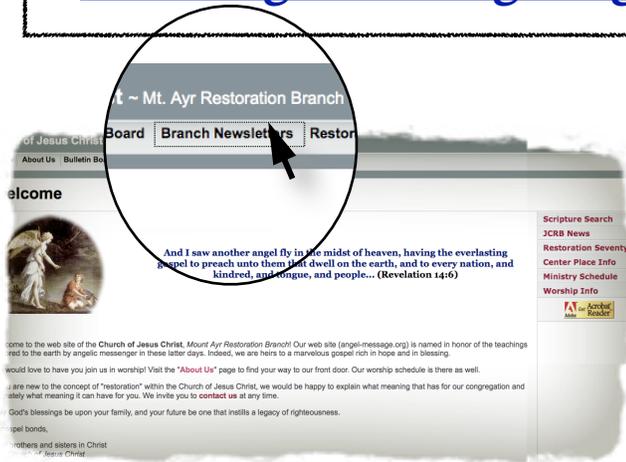
Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps
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CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST - MT AYR RESTORATION BRANCH

DECEMBER 2010

Thoughts

Who were the wise men? To find clues, read the testimony of B. Mildred Nelson Smith in Volume 2 of "The Master's Touch", chapter 17. It can be found online at: www.centerplace.org. Click on the 'Library' link at the top, then 'Testimonies', then 'The Master's Touch II'.



It seems fitting that at the end of another year, we pause and celebrate a beginning - the beginning of a new life in the person of Jesus Christ. With every end, there is a new beginning. With the death of a seed, comes the emergence of a new plant. Isn't that really what the Gospel teaches? Through the ordinance of baptism we see the importance of the old creature dying, being buried by the

water and a new creature being "born" as the body is raised out of the watery grave.

At some point in our life we must have Jesus born into our consciousness. We must choose to lay aside our desires for self gratification and take upon ourselves some level of self-sacrifice in His service. The level of service that we choose can vary as the brightness of the stars varies in the sky.

The night Jesus was born, the sky in the New World lit up enough to make it appear as day. His level of service was to give His whole life for all who would accept Him.

What will be the level of your service when He is born in your life? How bright will your light be in this dark and lonely world?

~Merry Christmas!



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