



Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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Remember,
Christ, Our Saviour,
Was Born
On Christmas Day!



News & Notes

December activities

On Sunday, Dec. 8, the branch has been invited to carol at the Christmas open house at Liberty Hall in Lamoni at 3:30 p.m. The Book of Mormon Christmas musical will be held at the South Chrysler Branch in Independence, MO, with prelude beginning at 5:30 p.m. and the musical that Nathan Smith wrote

at 6 p.m.

The Christmas caroling party will be held Sunday, Dec. 15 at 5 p.m. with everyone meeting at Ron and Di Smith's home in Lamoni.

The New Year's Eve party will be Tuesday, Dec. 31. Watch for time and place.

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Strength to Face the Giant

Priest Rodney Bastow

Mount Ayr, Iowa

November 3, 2013

As a Call to Worship, High Priest Alan Smith used Doctrine & Covenants 39:2b. *And this is my gospel: repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom.*

“This morning it’s my hope that each of us as we share in Elyse’s baptism of the Holy Spirit and in our own promise of having that Spirit to be with us as we share in the Lord’s Supper that our faith will be turned to knowledge of what that Comforter is that can show us all things and teach us the peaceable things of the kingdom,” Alan said.

Rodney Bastow then had Elyse Jordison come forward and he spent some time talking to her about what was going to happen as she received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

She then received the baptism of the Holy Spirit under the hands of High Priests Sherman Phipps and Alan Smith.

I am really blessed today. I have quite a support group here. I feel like I could sit down right now and turn it over to any one of them and we would be in really good hands. I haven’t decided whether to do that or not but in case I falter, you guys be ready.

Any time I get a chance to speak the first thing that comes to my mind is what am I going to say? This time I felt like I had several choices. I had things that went through my mind so I asked for God’s direction. I believe this morning He has given it to me.

I have a young man who has been helping me in the mornings do chores. He is in a work study through school. It’s a way for him to get out of school and for Debbie to stay in the house

so it’s a win/win situation all the way around. He comes over for about an hour and a half every day. Like most young people he does what I tell him to do but when I have him drive the tractor what’s the first thing that he does? He turns the radio to his station. I have noticed that the station that he turns to is a Christian music station. That’s OK. It’s 107.1 and I like it. I get some of the weather and some of the news and it’s good music.

Actually to be honest with you when I am in a tractor a lot of times I’m not listening to music. I’m usually thinking about something else. I guess I’m like my grandfather. He used to have traffic accidents because he’d get to thinking about something else and forget where he was going. I haven’t done that yet.

The other day I was picking up cornstalk bales with this tractor. I remember where I was at when this song came across about having strength to face the giant. That just really hit me. I thought, ‘I’ve got to find that song.’ What I want to talk about today is having the strength to face the giant.

As soon as I got in that night I went to the internet and started looking for the song but I could not find it. It was kind of bothering me a little bit that I couldn’t find it but when I got on Facebook, somebody had shared this song on there by Casting Crowns called, ‘Who Am I?’ Casting Crowns has become one of my favorite music groups now. I really like that song.

I started looking through their other music that they had and I found this song called ‘The Voice of Truth.’ This song had the words that I was looking for. I’d like to share those with you.

The Voice of Truth

By Casting Crowns

*Oh what I would do to have
The kind of faith to climb out of this
boat I’m in
Onto the crashing waves
To step out of my comfort zone
To the realm of the unknown*

*where Jesus is
And He’s holding out his hand*

*But the waves are calling out my name
and they laugh at me
Reminding me of all the times I’ve tried
before and failed*

*The waves they keep on telling me
Time and time again.*

*‘Boy, you’ll never win!’
‘You’ll never win.’*

*But the voice of truth tells me a
different story*

*And the voice of truth says ‘
Do not be afraid!’*

*And the voice of truth says ‘
This is for My glory’*

*Out of all the voices calling out to me
I will choose to listen and believe
the voice of truth*

*Oh what I would do to have
The kind of strength it takes*

*to stand before a giant
With just a sling and a stone
Surrounded by the sound of a
thousand warriors*

*Shaking in their armor
Wishing they’d have had the strength
to stand*

*But the giant’s calling out my name and
he laughs at me*

*Reminding me of all the times I’ve tried
before and failed*

*The giant keeps on telling me
Time and time again*

*Boy, you’ll never win!
“You’ll never win”*

*But the stone was just the right size
To put the giant on the ground
And the waves they don’t seem so high*

*From on top of them looking down
I will soar with the wings of eagles
When I stop and listen to
the sound of Jesus*

*Singing over me
I will choose to listen and believe
the voice of truth.*



Who's that song talking about? It's talking about David and Goliath. David had the strength to fight the giant even though he was just a young man. He knew that God would protect him. He had faith in God and listened to His voice. What did the giant do when he saw David? He laughed at him. He thought they were making fun of him but David listened to the voice of God and he not only faced that giant, he won.



Who else is the song talking about? Who walked upon the water? Peter did. I want to read you the scripture that tells you about this story. This is from Matthew 14:19-28. *And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain, apart, to pray. And when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves; for the wind was contrary. (What does that mean that it was contrary? It wasn't calm. It was really blowing up a storm.) And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship, came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God.*

Peter listened to the voice of Jesus and He was able to walk on the water. Why did he sink? Why wasn't he able to walk to Jesus? Was he focused on Jesus? No, he looked down at the water.

He saw the storm. He saw the problems and he was afraid of what was going to happen to him rather than focusing on Jesus.

If he would have kept his focus on Jesus, he would not have sunk. That's a good reminder, isn't it? All of us have problems but what do we do when we have those problems? Do we think about the problems or do we focus on Jesus and listen for His voice?

I liked Jim's message last Sunday to a point. Unfortunately for me it pointed out some shortcomings that I have in my life. It reminded me that I need to listen to the voice of Jesus so I could hang onto that rod of iron that leads to the right path so that I can find salvation. I need to have more faith that God will take care of me. I need to trust Him more in my daily life. I need to be more loving, to listen better, to be more considerate, to think more of others than I do of myself and to be more willing to serve. I need to study more so that I can share more with others.

The missionary work that is going on in Osceola, IA just amazes me. I am in awe of that. It's incredible for those men to go to a strange place without any money and without any place to stay. They must have a really strong faith. They must have a really strong belief in Jesus Christ, and they must really be able to hear His voice. From what I understand they have been blessed. There have been several baptisms. The group is growing and I pray that it will continue.

What is the voice of Jesus calling us to do? Are we listening to it or are

we listening to the voices of the world? They laugh at me reminding me of all the times I've tried before and failed. They keep telling me time and time again 'boy, you'll never win! You'll never win.' The voice of Jesus tells a different story. The voice of Jesus says, 'Do not be afraid!' The voice of Jesus says 'This is for My glory.' Out of all the voices calling out to me I will choose to listen and believe the voice of truth.

Third Nephi 8:39-41 says, *And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them, Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you. And this shall ye always do unto those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me, ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.*

I hope we have that Spirit to be with us. If we have it to be with us always we'll have the strength to face the giant.



Rodney Bastow



But Who Shall Be Called My Zion?

**Elder
Michael Joridson
Lamoni, Iowa
November 10, 2013**

As a Call to Worship Elder Steven Smith read Alma 15:55. *I ought not to harrow up in my desires, the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills; whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction.*

Good morning, brothers and sisters. For a scripture reading this morning, I'd like to share a very familiar passage to all of us I'm sure. It's taken from the Book of Genesis 7:21-27, *And the fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord which was upon his people. And the Lord blessed the land, and they were blessed upon the mountains, and upon the high places, and did flourish. And the Lord called his people, Zion, because they were of one heart and of one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them. And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the city of Holiness, even Zion. And it came to pass, that Enoch talked with the Lord, and he said unto the Lord, Surely, Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch, Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed. And it came to pass, that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth, and he beheld, and lo! Zion in process of time was taken up into heaven.*

Now we're going to jump forward to Noah's day and this is from Genesis 9:15, 19-23. *And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I will establish my covenant with you, which I made unto your father Enoch, concerning your seed after you. I will set my bow in the cloud; and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant, which I have made between me and you, for every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch.*

Steven (Smith) asked me what my topic was going to be earlier this week. I told him, 'I don't know', like I usually tell whoever happens to preside when they ask. However today I have titled my sermon (if you want to call it a sermon because it's probably not going to be much of one), "But Who Shall be Called my Zion."

I just read from the scriptures about Zion. If I were to ask you the question, 'What is Zion?', how would you

respond? What is Zion? We've been commissioned in these latter days to build up Zion and that should be one of our main focuses in the Church. The Kingdom of God on earth, Zion, was one of the things that this Church used to preach a lot about. What does Zion mean to you?

Samuel (Jordison), what does Zion mean to you? He answered, that everyone would be together. Norman (Nelson), what does Zion mean to you? He answered, the pure in heart.

Where is Zion? It's in heaven. Where is it supposed to be? It's supposed to be on earth. That's what I want to talk about today. I have some testimonies that I want to share with you this morning because I think they are very powerful and they speak to where we are today and speak to us as a people, even though they were given many years ago.

Let me tell you a little about my desk. You wouldn't know this about me but I like to have everything in its place on my desk. If I have papers on the desk, which I'd rather not have, but if I do I like them all neat, set at right angles with square corners and stacked in nice neat piles. I like my stapler to sit just square with the edge of the desk. I have a little holder for my business cards which I like to sit at 45° angle directly opposite of a picture of my children, also set at a 45° angle. Everything has to be set just right or it throws the whole desk out of balance. However, what happens throughout the day is that I get started on something and within two or three minutes something else has come to me that I have to address.

Before I know it, I've got a jumbled mess of papers, sticky notes and mail scattered about my desk. You can hardly see the top of it any longer. Well, I think eventually I'll get to it and get



everything cleaned up but before you know it I get called away. So I think I'll get to it tomorrow. Tomorrow comes and nothing changes. There's no more time to get things cleaned up and so the pattern of chaos repeats itself. I can't ever seem to really get my desk cleaned up.

Do you believe that this bothers me? After a while I don't even notice that my desk is messy. I don't even notice that things are out of place and everything's not square or at proper angles. I just keep on doing my immediate work in this jumble of chaos until one defining moment. I don't know when that defining moment's going to be but eventually I'll reach it. And even though I'm working in the midst of all this chaos on my desk, my mind will say, 'I can't stand it no longer!' and I have to get it cleaned up because I just can't really function anymore in that environment.

I didn't seem to notice much while working in the mess that I wasn't really being efficient with my work. And so it doesn't matter what's happening out there in the rest of the office or who is calling me, I've got to get all of that stuff put away to find my sanity. Even if I don't get it all in its perfect place, I just have to scoop it up and put it back in those nice even rows where eventually I can get to those stacks of paper.

The reason I'm sharing this with you is because I think that's where we are as a people in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in these days. We've had this goal or vision of this concept called Zion. We know that it's out there and we're supposed to be working towards that goal but somehow or other we've been distracted by all the things that we have to do. Yes we have to work. We have to go to school. We have to go grocery shopping. We've got to cook, pay bills and do all of the things that are necessary in life because this is the kind of world that we live in. We have to do those things but we've been so distracted that we've taken our eye off what it takes to get to the goal of building Zion. For many of us we are dealing with important and immediate concerns in the midst of a chaotic spiri-

tual (and physical) environment

Steffie (Cunningham), as a softball player when you are up to bat and getting ready to hit the ball, where do you want that ball to go? When I played ball I never got a home run where I actually hit over the fence, but the goal is to hit that ball, if you can, out of play and score the runs. Standing at the plate (and you know the goal is there past the outfield just beyond the wall) that's where you want the ball to go, if you're looking at the goal what's going to happen? You are not going to see the ball and you are going to miss it. Before you can put that ball where you want it to go, you have to keep your eye on the immediate thing that will allow you to reach your goal.

Samuel and I went golfing over our vacation. That's the first time that we've done that as a family. Where do you want that golf ball to end up when you are standing up there in the tee box? You've got the ball there on a tee. Where's that ball supposed to go? It's supposed to go in a hole. That hole could be two, three, four, five hundred yards away but that's the goal. If you are lined up there with your club down by the ball and you put your eye on the goal, which is the pin way down there on the green, what's going to happen when you swing? You're going to miss the golf ball. Before you can reach your goal to have to address the immediate concern before you.

That's where we are as a church. We've lost our focus as a people. We talk about the kingdom of Zion. We sing about Zion. We read and memorize scriptures about Zion and we talk a lot about it. We understand the goal of working towards Zion, but we've lost our focus on what really needs to happen in order for us to achieve that goal. These are day to day things, things such as keeping God's commandments, making our lives and homes habitations for the Spirit of Christ, fasting and praying regularly, feasting upon the scriptures, learning to forgive and love in humility. Until we begin to really start making these things a primary focus (cleaning up the desktop of our lives) we are going to let the chaos of the world, (including those necessary things like school,

work, bills, etc) clutter up our lives so that we aren't efficient or capable workers in Christ's Church.

Yvonne (Galusha) recently shared a testimony on email. I didn't read it when she sent it because I've read it many, many times before but I was directed to that again this morning. Some of you I know have read this and you've heard it. But I know some of you haven't so I want to share it especially for the youth who may be unfamiliar with it. I want all of you to listen to these experiences that I want to share with you this as they are applicable for all of us, back when they were given as well as today. The first one is titled, 'The Four Clouds Over Zion.' I think it really should be called, 'The Clouds Over Zion' because I believe there are more than four. This was given back in October of 1971 (that's forty years ago) by Elder Ray Huggett. Basically I'm going to summarize the first part of this.

He was asked to speak at a reunion and was speaking on the principles of the kingdom of God. While he was preparing for that he was given some instruction with insight on the kingdom of God and how that relates to our everyday living. During one of the morning prayer services he had this vision open up to him. When the apostle who was presiding was standing at the pulpit during



Michael Jordison



one of the services he had the following experience, relating, *And I saw a ray of light around which all things centered, so bright you couldn't look up at it directly. And I wondered, what is this? And I saw people too, multitudes of people. It looked like numberless, countless numbers of people, gathering, just seemed to be drawn toward this light. And even as these questions formed in my mind it was as though someone spoke into my inner ear and said these are the holy men of all ages gathering before the Throne of Grace. Oh, I've read about the fact that God is beyond time. I even read in the scriptures that he knew the past, the present, the future all together. I had never known it this way before. I didn't know I could even see it, and could see the fact that all those men who had already passed on, those men who were present, and I sensed their presence, and those who were yet unborn could all be related at one time to God. And this great company of the faithful were united in their purpose preparing for the great culmination of God's marvelous and mysterious act, the great consummation of Zion.*

Well, I marveled at this experience and I saw, too, the outline of what I perceived to be the Holy City. And you know, it was shrouded with clouds and I knew it must be a beautiful city, and I felt what a shame to think these dark depressing clouds hang over and occlude most of it out so it's obscure to the vision, and I wondered what it meant.

And you know, I was told some things and these clouds seemed like such little things that I was really surprised that we hadn't removed them long ago. But I was told that these clouds have to do with the way we teach our children regarding such simple things as keeping the Sabbath, to keep it holy and that our children grow up and really never understand that Sunday is the Lord's day. That it is the day that commemorates the coming forth of our Lord from the tomb. It's not our day at all. It's HIS DAY. That our bodies need to be refreshed, replenished. We need to be restored spiritually. We need to be related to his glorious coming forth on that day. That it's not just another day of work or recreation, but it's a day when we need to have communion

with God. And I was surprised that such a little thing could sometimes stand in the way of the great culmination of Zion.

And I was told that our concept of stewardship has often been narrowed to a mere mosaic approach to finances. Just an accounting of money instead of the joyous accounting for the totality of life and for the relating of our life to his Kingdom's purpose and our commitment fully, of which the finances is but one expression of that commitment.

And so our children sometimes grow up not knowing what it is to be a steward under God in the world in which we live, but only think about giving money or filling out papers.

And somehow we've failed to teach our children about the sanctity of marriage and its true purpose. And our children grow up thinking, well, if this doesn't work, we'll try another one. And somehow they don't seem to understand or to appreciate that marriage in the truest sense is a sacramental relationship. It's where God enters into a covenant between two people and where they can give themselves fully and wholly and express themselves without remorse of conscience and guilt, and feelings of fear, and can have a union that's joyful, that sustains, that's complimentary opposites one to another, that fulfills and gives joy and happiness and hope and those things which give strength to each individual who takes part in a true marriage.

Sometimes we haven't taught our children how to preserve themselves for this experience so they don't have to look back with remorse and sorrow and broken hearts upon their experimentation of an earlier day. And such things as not teaching our children these principles have indeed detracted from the culmination of the Zion expression.

Sometimes we've not become true disciples because we've lacked discipline of mind and body, and we've been controlled by physical appetites rather than preserving this temple of God, holy and sacred and committing it to his expression. These things were impressed upon me as well.

It goes on to talk about a few other things which I'm not going to share with you this morning but the point of the vi-

sion was that there are things every day of our lives that we do or go through that hold us back from understanding and fulfilling our mission as Saints of the Most High God in seeking to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.

The next experience that I'd like to share was given by Apostle J.W. Wight in 1911. I'd like for you to listen to the words. They were spoken to the Lamoni Stake Reunion at that time. I believe that they are also applicable to us today. The Lamoni reunion of 1911 was pronounced by many one of the best reunions ever held in the Lamoni Stake. The prayer meetings were spiritual feasts, the Spirit being manifested in an unusual degree. The following prophecy was given to the Saints by the Spirit through Apostle J. W. Wight at the morning prayer service of August 25.

Yea, thus sayeth the still, small voice of the Spirit—that Spirit that pierceth the soul, that comes as a comforter, sent to the people of God, promised by the Son of God as a comforter—saying to my people, [remember this was one of the most spiritual reunions of their day] I have come to you in special enduing power during the sessions of this reunion, and had my people been more faithful, more humble, I could have exercised greater power among you, and your lives would have been made to rejoice even more.

This special endowment has come to give unto my people a foretaste of what it means to dwell in Zion, and to help you make the needed preparation for that great event. Oh, in pleading with you this morning, my people, will you from henceforth make greater effort and seek to overcome more of your own follies, foibles, and weaknesses, [For those of you who don't know know follies are foolishness and foibles could be defined as shortcomings or flaws.] and to heed the injunction given thee?

More especially will the young of my people, hearing, give heed to my voice and to my pleading, and forget not. Go not away and turn again to the follies of the world. Let all my people cease their bickerings, their strife, their backbiting, their follies. Overcome these weaknesses. Cease to be jealous one with another.



Seek to please God in all that you do and say, forgetful as to whether it shall please man or not; but seek to be examples of that life lived by your Master so long before you as an evidence of the attainment that my people may be permitted to reach.

Your Father has sent forth his Spirit this morning to witness unto your souls, to give you comfort and consolation, and has spoken to one of the handmaids of the church for special reasons, to give her encouragement in the hour of need, and now speaks to one and all, that inasmuch as you give heed to the injunctions of the voice of that Spirit, that still small voice that comes in the very hour of need, if you will but prepare for it, now speaks to you, and again admonishes to be faithful, be diligent, be earnest, be prayerful; overcome the temptations and trials of life; seek to build character for God, so that in the day of preparation, you may really be among the number that shall see Jesus; and diligently strive that you may be with the faithful, having made the necessary preparation to meet your God.

Oh, will my people hear the pleading of my voice, and live more humbly, more faithfully? And then will the blessings be poured out more and more, and there will come to you that comfort, that consolation that nothing else can bring. Thus saith the voice of the Spirit. Amen.

Can you hear the word of the Lord to you today in that counsel from 1911?

It was brought up in class today that when God asks a question, He's not looking for an answer for something that he doesn't know. When God asks, 'But who shall be called my Zion,' how would you answer? Who shall be called my Zion? He's looking for a response, not an answer. Steven Smith could tell us that He's looking for a response in our Thoughts, Emotions, Words and Actions. (See Brother Smith's previous sermon) We can answer what Zion is. We can go to the scriptures and find that it's the 'pure in heart'. We can discover that it says that God called his people 'Zion,' because they dwelt in righteousness and there was no poor among them. We can give those answers, can't we? But that's not what He's looking for. He's looking for a response on our be-

half, not answers.

In the scriptures our Brother Alma teaches us that this life is but a probationary period. It's time to prepare to meet God. It's time to prepare for the kingdom of God to come to us, whether that kingdom is a physical kingdom as the City of Enoch coming down out of heaven or whether that kingdom is something that's resident within our hearts. Elyse had the gift of the Holy Ghost last Sunday, the gift of the comforter, the peaceable things of the kingdom.

When we are baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints under this gospel and this promise, we are given the keys to the kingdom to use as needed. The gift and the power of the Holy Ghost is there to teach us, to instruct us, to guide us and to fill those gaps and those holes that we can't seem to fill and measure up to on our own. The grace of God upon is the same as that kingdom. That is what He's looking for in our response: For us to use the gift that He gave us when we were confirmed.

The last experience that I want to share with you this morning comes from our Brother Joseph Luff. It was given in the year 1906 and published in the Ensign. See if you can hear the words of the Lord to you this day.

Behold, saith the Lord, I have heard and do hear the petitions of my people. My ear is not heavy, neither is my arm short. My covenant with Israel is not forgotten, nor is my will slow to perform; but to whom shall I speak? and by whom shall my counsel be observed? Behold, I am wedded to my covenant and am jealous of my agreement with those who are thereunder. Once I have spoken! yea, twice have I declared that the set time to favor Zion has come; but my army is not yet very great, and their weapons, many of them, are yet carnal. Nevertheless, my word shall not fail, neither shall my purpose be changed, notwithstanding my people are slow to perceive, and the confidence of some has failed.

Dig ye deep into the mountains which centuries have formed and unto which my providences are interwoven,

and bring forth the witnesses of my forgetfulness or the testimonies of my failure. Reveal unto me wherein the generations have made frail the texture of my ordinances or dissolved the integrity of my promises. Speak, and I will hearken unto you! Declare, and I will give audience! Who hath been able to stand in the way of my accomplishment or hath put fetters upon my hands? Are not cities and nations and villages but as pebbles in my hands? For, behold, on yesterday their magnitude was thine amazement and tomorrow thou shalt ask: "Where are they?" and shalt declare, "Surely the Lord's hand is in this thing."

Remember, therefore, that I change not, neither is my power nor my purpose, and what I have designed I will execute, and naught shall stay my hand, and my heritage shall not fail.

But who shall be called my Zion? Shall I execute my purpose? Where shall my hand find its weapons of execution and its instruments for performance? Shall it not be among those whose hearts are found pure and whose eyes shall be single? Yea, verily! Stand ye, therefore, in holy places and if ye will enjoy my intelligence be ye mine and mine only! for such is your agreement. But ye say, "Wherein have we failed and in what is our infidelity revealed?" Listen, and I will give answer, and then shall ye reply whether ye have been silent when evil has been present among you and whether ye have consented thereby to a defilement of mine heritage.

For behold, houses have been builded unto me and have been, nevertheless, reserved for pleasures which do not enrich the soul. Altars have been dedicated unto me and have been shared with other gods. The mammon of this world has been sought by guile and oppression and unseemly desire by some, and because a portion thereof has been given as a tithe or an offering unto me, it hath been imagined that I will wink at these things; some have declared themselves separated unto me and I have chosen them out of the world and made them to be agents unto me; but they have sought out other shrines and made covenant in secret places in which I have no delight.

Behold, and consider! If my servants



are not sufficient for your faith, shall these things give them increase or shall ye add that which is carnal to make effective the work for which my Spirit hath been given?

Shall I be content while this evil doth pollute my estate? Behold the brick that is not burned and the mortar which is not tempered; yea, and the material which I have not selected shall not find permanent place with that of my choosing; for my fires shall consume and my floods shall overwhelm, and the men within and without my church shall yet learn that but one pattern hath been given by which ye shall build if I shall accept your labor; and but one life hath been given by which to measure; [Who's life was that? Christ] and whosoever shall not gauge himself thereby and crucify himself to the world, shall yet be gauged thereby and shall lose his all for "whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken, but upon whomsoever shall not gauge himself thereby and crucify himself to the world, shall yet be gauged thereby and shall lose his all for "whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken, but upon whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder."

Live ye, therefore, and labor in love, not so much that ye may obtain, but that ye may make effective my law and exemplify my life. In this ye shall find riches and your peace shall not fail, and thus I shall have delight in those who not only say but do according to the purpose of my gospel. Again, that was given in 1906.

I don't know if you know this or not but when the revelations were given through Joseph Smith, Jr., the Lord gave instruction that Doctrine and Covenants Section 108 should be the close or the end of Book of Commandments at that time. It was to be the Appendix. As any English student should be able to tell you when you state your argument or you state your case, you usually start out with your main points and then elaborate on them and then you restate them. This section was to be the closing arguments for the Lord in the Book of Commandments. There are several things in this section but the one that I want to bring out this morning is the one we find here in three different plac-

es.

In Hebrew there is no superlative form of a word. You can't say best in Hebrew. The way to say it in Hebrew would be 'good good good'. So when you find something in the scriptures where God has stated it more than once it's time to listen up. This is what He said to us. *Wherefore prepare ye, prepare ye, O my people; sanctify yourselves; gather ye together, O ye people of my church, upon the land of Zion, . . . Go ye out from Babylon. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. . . And let every man call upon the name of the Lord; yea, verily I say unto you again, The time has come when the voice of the Lord is unto you, Go ye out of Babylon; . . . Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour. Let them, therefore, who are among the Gentiles, flee unto Zion. And let them who be of Judah, flee unto Jerusalem, unto the mountains of the Lord's house. Go ye out from among the nations, even from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon.* (D & C 108:2a-2c; 4a-b)

We talked briefly about Babylon in the adult class. I can tell those of you of our younger generation, Babylon is not a place that you want to go to. What the Lord is telling the people is that He's likening the world that we live in and some of the things that we enjoy in our society to a place called spiritual Babylon - a bad place. He's telling us to come out of that bad place. He's telling us to separate ourselves from the things of this world and begin to focus on the heavenly things, upon the spiritual things of eternal value. To realize our goal as a church to build up Zion means that we have to come out of the bad places that we may be in individually - spiritual Babylon. One by one, those chains that separate us from a greater relationship with Christ must be removed or broken.

Let me share something that I found this morning that I didn't know. Do we have to keep the law of tithing? What do you think? Can we be saved if we don't pay our tithing? Yes, we can be saved if we don't pay our tithing. Can we be saved if we don't always keep the Lord's Day? I can tell you right now that

some days I haven't kept the Lord's Day very well. Does God still bless us when we sin? Does He continue to bless us sometimes when we fail and make mistakes? I can tell you, yes He does. I think you all can say that as well.

Here's what I am trying to say, brothers and sisters, this morning; what I feel like God is calling us to. We can keep the commandments on a certain level. We can not lie, we can not kill, and we can not steal. Those are kind of easy commandments for the most part I think for most of us to keep. That's good but there are other things that God is looking for us to do so that we can bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.

I'm not going to go through and read all the scriptures because we don't have time, but study the scriptures and you'll find that the commission and the commandment of the church in these latter days is to build up the kingdom of Zion. If we don't seek to do that we can be blessed but God will speak to us, just like in the testimonies that I've shared this morning, during the times when the church had been very spiritual and God said, 'You know what? You are my children but I expect a little bit more out of you and I know you can do better. If you will just get rid of those distractions in your lives, those things that are holding you back from more of my Spirit, then I can bless you so that really you can prepare, YOU can prepare to build the kingdom of Zion on this earth. You can do things that I want, that I've commanded this church to do.'

Now let's go back to what I found this morning. In Doctrine and Covenants 108:2a-b it says . . . *sanctify yourselves; gather ye together, O ye people of my church, upon the land of Zion. . .* One of those clouds that was overshadowing the Holy City in Brother Huggett's testimony was the obedience to the financial law, something very simple. The church has gone on a long time without being fully compliant with obedience to the financial law but in 106:2b He says this *And I say unto you, If my people observe not this law, [He's talking about the financial law and He's talking about them in a certain day here. Let's keep this in context.] to keep it holy, and by this law*



sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and my judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, behold, verily I say unto you, It shall not be a land of Zion unto you. . . You don't have to keep the law but you are not going to receive the promise. He goes on to say . . . and this shall be an ensample unto all the stakes of Zion. . .

As far as I'm concerned that wasn't given to them just for that time. That's given to all the Stakes of Zion. That's given to us in this day. This is just one aspect of something that we need to be focused on keeping. If we don't keep the financial law, He promises that we won't be a part of the bringing forth and the building of Zion. We can talk about it. We can preach about it. We can sing about it and we can share all these wonderful testimonies of how God's blessed us and all the things that we've done and how great it would be to live in Zion but if we aren't actually doing the detailed things that God says, we are not going to be able to realize that goal. We have to focus on the immediate things that hold us back from our goal.

In Section 102:2c it says Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom, otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. That's my call to us today, brothers and sisters, to take the time to think about things in our lives that are holding us back, those clouds of obscurity and oppression that are taking us away from being able to realize the kingdom of God. Not just the kingdom of God in the physical sense with the Holy City coming down but the kingdom of God that's to be resident within us. If we have sin in our lives then we have a place where God cannot be.

I'll let you in on a little secret about me. There's a little part of me that's fearful. I've read that scripture that says we are to offer our whole souls unto God as an offering. There are parts of me that I don't want to give up. There are parts of me that maybe I don't want God to even know about. I don't know how that's possible but if there is something within me that is not a part of God and His plan then God can't be there in His fullness like He wants to be. Somehow

or other we've got to overcome that. Maybe you are not like me but if you are then we have got to learn to let it go and learn to trust God and His Spirit and let the Holy Ghost that was given to us at the time of our baptism of fire work within us.

You see the Holy Ghost is a gift. If I give you a gift and you look at it with it's pretty bow and shiny wrapping paper and you decide that it's so beautiful that you are just going to take it and set it upon a shelf so that everybody can see this beautiful gift you won't know what's inside. If you never take the time to pull open the ribbon and undo the gift, you are never going to be able to realize that gift that's been given to you. When we were baptized with the fire and the Holy Ghost that is the gift that God gave us. He gave us the tools that we would need to accomplish everything or anything

that He ever asks us to do. We don't have to have any other single tool if we have that.

I always feel like I'm the bearer of bad news but that's the burden that God has placed on me. I know you are good folks. I know each one of you and love you but God is calling us to a higher purpose. Maybe I didn't give you a lot of tools today to help you accomplish your own journey of coming out of Babylon but they are not really my tools to give anyway.

We've all been given the Holy Ghost and if we'll trust and rely upon that and upon Him, He will teach us all things that we need to know in order to become a righteous generation, a peculiar people, those who are able to assist in the bringing forth and the establishment of the cause of Zion in these days.



Elyse Jordison was baptized with the Holy Ghost by High Priests Sherman Phipps and Alan Smith at the service November 10.



What Will You Do?

**Elder
Steven Cunningham**
Boone, Iowa
November 17, 2013

Elder Michael Jordison shared 2nd Nephi 13:22-32 as a Call to Worship. *Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen, that your Lord and your Redeemer should do: For, for this cause have they been shewn unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water: and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire, and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; And ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye enter in by the way, ye should receive. And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save; Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. And now behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven, whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.*

As a scripture reading Brother Cun-

ningham used Doctrine and Covenants 108:1-3. *Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the Lord your God, and hear the word of the Lord concerning you; the Lord who shall suddenly come to his temple; the Lord who shall come down upon the world with a curse to judgment; yea, upon all the nations that forget God, and upon all the ungodly among you. For he shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of their God. Wherefore prepare ye, prepare ye, O my people; sanctify yourselves; gather ye together, O ye people of my church, upon the land of Zion, all you that have not been commanded to tarry. Go ye out from Babylon. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Call your solemn assemblies, and speak often one to another. And let every man call upon the name of the Lord; yea, verily I say unto you again, The time has come when the voice of the Lord is unto you, Go ye out of Babylon; gather ye out from among the nations, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Send forth the elders of my church unto the nations which are afar off; unto the islands of the sea; send forth unto foreign lands; call upon all nations; firstly, upon the Gentiles, and then upon the Jews. And, behold, and lo, this shall be their cry, and the voice of the Lord unto all people: Go ye forth unto the land of Zion, that the borders of my people may be enlarged, and that her stakes may be strengthened, and that Zion may go forth unto the regions round about; yea, let the cry go forth among all people: Awake and arise and go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Behold, and lo, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord.*

Last week Michael talked about Zion. He talked about what we were willing to do for Zion. He asked what Zion meant to us. I made the comment that it meant 'joy.' If you read the definition for Zion it says that Zion refers to the

Lord's people who are of one heart and one mind and dwell together in righteousness. We can establish Zion by building unity and spiritual strength in our homes, our branches and our communities. How awesome would it be to have Zion? We would have such joy in Zion. What more could we want for our children than to have them grow up in the land of Zion, to be of one heart and one mind and dwell with people who believed the way they believe.

This week as I was preparing there were a couple of things that came to my mind. One was what do we want within our lives? I know that this changes as we grow. I remember when I was very young we had black and white TVs and you had to change them by hand. You didn't have a remote. I remember always wanting it to be Saturday morning because back in those days, believe it or not, you could not watch cartoons except on Saturday morning. We didn't have cable. We had just regular antennas. When I was young I wanted it to be Saturday all the time so that I could watch cartoons.

I remember when I got a little bit older I wanted a shotgun. My Dad, Uncle John and I used to come down here to Mount Ayr starting the latter part of the 70s to go pheasant hunting. We used to come for the opening weekend and then the day after Thanksgiving and I wanted my own shotgun. My family didn't have a lot of money so if you wanted something you had to buy it yourself. I remember being in 6th grade and finding a shotgun to buy. Of course I didn't want a cheap shotgun, I wanted a really nice one. I remember throwing papers as a paper boy and saving my money from that for almost a year.

As I would get some saved up I would take it to the store where I had found the shotgun. Store owners were a lot friendlier than they are now. They let me put some money down on the shotgun and keep paying on it periodically. When I would go to the store to



put money down, he would let me hold it. I thought he was just being nice but he was giving me incentive to come back the next time with more money. I knew substitute paper boys were often needed so I would go substitute other people's routes. A couple of times the janitor at the newspaper needed somebody to fill in for him so I would do that. I did whatever it took to get the shotgun. By the time pheasant season got there I had bought my shotgun. I was willing to do whatever it took to get that shotgun.

I remember being in grade school and being excited about going into seventh grade. Once I entered high school my want was to turn 16 so that I could drive a car. So your wants change throughout your life. Once you got a car you wanted to graduate. Once you graduated you wanted to finish college, get married and have kids. Then much later, you were excited when your kids were going to graduate and move out. Like I said we all have wants and they change depending upon our age.

I remember going down to Ather-ton, MO to church quite a bit. At Ather-ton they talked about Zion in the 80s and that was their theme 'Zion in the 80s'. They talked about what it took to have Zion and they studied about this. They would actually give you assignments to do to make sure that this was what was on your heart. I remember the excitement of Zion after all these other things I wanted. I was just in my early teens but this is something that I remember. I remember wanting Jesus Christ in my heart and in my life.

After we had kids things changed a little bit because a lot things that I had wanted I wanted for myself. When we had kids I wanted to make sure that I was going to teach them the things that they needed to know to make it through life. We've had a fairly good life even though we have had a few tragedies lately. When we grew up we would eat at the table and we would say our prayers and go to church on Sunday. Mom and Dad were very good parents but I wanted a little bit more. I wanted my kids to know that they were going to be part of Zion. I wanted my kids to

KNOW that it's not all about just coming to church but they had responsibilities whether male or female. I wanted my kids to understand this because I want Zion.

If you go to Deuteronomy 6:4-7 it says, *Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

It's not just talking about our children but it's talking about children. We have a responsibility to teach our children to keep them on the right path. There are so many things that pull our children away from Jesus Christ. In this day a lot of it is social media. I know that there is Facebook out there. I listen to WHO radio once in a while and they talk about the different forms of social media. The broadcaster started listing these different social media, one of which was snapchat. Out of five that he listed I didn't know about any of them. He talked about how the kids of today are communicating and the things that are going on using social media.

I remember if something happened at school whether I was doing the teasing or the one being teased when I went home I was with my family. I wasn't with the world. The world was not in my home. My home was my home. That's something that we don't have these days. The world comes into our homes in many different ways whether it be by the TV, by the internet, or by social media.

It scares me to death some of the things that these kids discuss and have to go through because it doesn't stop once they leave school. As parents what do we need to do, not just for our kids but for other kids? We're here to teach them about Jesus Christ. We're here to let them know that there's something more than what the world offers. Again what are we willing to do for what we

want? Like I said before I wanted that shotgun and I did whatever it took to get it. There are a lot of things that I have wanted that I was willing to do whatever it took to get them.

I have wanted a lot for my children but being a parent is not always the best thing to be because when you tell a child that they can't go out with somebody, that they can't hang around with somebody, it's not because you want to be mean or want to stifle their social life but you see things that they don't see because of the wisdom that you have because you have gone through what they are going through. Kids have to figure this out for themselves but at the same time we as parents need to teach them what is right.

Once in a while we sacrifice a relationship that we have with our children. My daughter was dating an individual that I just couldn't stand. They ended up breaking up. I didn't act like I was excited even though I was but then she started dating him again. She's not here so I can talk about her. When I get frustrated and mad I'm not a very nice person. I'm what I call a 'down to earth' kind of person. I use common sense. This boy she was dating and I had a discussion that she didn't know about. He was trying to blame the way he was on his life style. I just laid into him. I told him that he was a man and as a man he



Steven Cunningham



had responsibilities, and if he was dating my daughter and didn't accept those responsibilities he wouldn't be allowed in our house. She now has another boyfriend who was over to our house one day. I asked him what he would do if I started yelling at my daughter and threatened to hit her. I said, 'What would you do?' He looked at me and said, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'OK, let's say some person comes up and threatens my daughter, what would you do?' He said, 'Well, I guess I'd stand up for her.' I said, 'What if it was me? What happens if I come up to Steffie and threaten to hit her? What are you going to do?' He looked at me and said, 'Well, I guess I'd step in the middle of it.' I said, 'That's exactly what I want. I expect you to be a protector of my daughter.'

As parents we have to be protectors of our children. We have to know what's going on in their lives. We have to know what's going on in social media but above all we have to be teaching them the gospel. I know that I haven't done the best job with my kids but I've made sure we've gone to church and that my children know Jesus Christ.

Christopher is almost 22 years old. Jacob will be 16 this next year and Steffie will be 19. It doesn't stop because we still have responsibilities. I watched the movie "Courageous" last night. It's an awesome awesome movie. I just really enjoy watching it. The dad in the movie was sitting down with the daughter and was explaining what his role as a father was to be. The father was to protect his daughter and to make sure that the man that she was going to date loved God more than anything else.

How many times do we as people who have daughters set down and have that discussion with them? How many times when something is going wrong do we turn to our kids and say, 'That's not right not because it's not of God. It's hard because you may be losing some of that relationship you have with your child. You know what? In the end we won't lose that relationship. It doesn't matter if it's our son or daughter or our co-workers.

I still remember the time when my commander came up to me and asked

me to pray for his youngest son Nick because he was sick. The only reason he asked me was because he knew some of my beliefs because we had had the time to set down one time and share. He came to me. I didn't go to him. I had no idea his son was sick.

It's time to step out of our comfort zone and preach the gospel. It's time for us to step out and preach about Zion and call people to repentance. If you want to know what our purpose here is read Alma 9:41. *Therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state, which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead.* This is our probationary time. I'm talking to the kids and everybody else. This is your probationary time. This is the time that you show to God what you are willing to do for Him. It's a time for us to stand up and do what's right. I enjoy hunting. I enjoy fishing. I enjoy being busy but this is our probationary time. Again it's time for us to stand up and share what we believe.

This week I knew that it was my responsibility to preach the sermon but a lot of things came up during the week. I almost called on Wednesday to ask someone else to do it not because I wanted to but a lot of things happened this week. This is our busiest time for people to bring stuff in to our taxidermy shop. The whole month before we had only taken two or three animals brought in. It had been really slow so I thought it was not going to be a big deal to get ready to preach. However, Monday we had three animals come in. Tuesday we had three animals come in. Wednesday we had three animals come in and also on Thursday.

Because of what we are taking in we have to do something with them immediately. I can't throw the animals in the freezer. I have to cape them out. I have to keep all their paperwork to make sure that the cape, the antlers and the money that people give me are all correct. Tuesday I thought if I could just get past Tuesday I could make it to Wednesday and it wouldn't be bad. Well on Wednesday I immediately start-

ed getting phone calls of people wanting to bring animals over. Again I almost called and asked if someone could help me out with preaching. What are we willing to do? What are we willing to give up? Sue and I gave up a lot of sleep this last week. Then Christopher was having his going away party next Friday but decided to make it today when we get home so Friday and Saturday we had to get things ready for the party but what were we willing to do for what we believe in? What are we willing to fight for?

I know at times I can set back and claim ignorance but I know that's not a true statement because God covers all His bases. If you go back to Hosea 4:6 you will find, My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. The lack of knowledge will destroy you. I hear so many people talk about the Bill of Rights, about the Constitution but do we really know what the Constitution says?

Every year fewer and fewer people know what it says. Therefore, we allow the government to do what they want because we don't know the Constitution. The lack of knowledge will destroy us. It doesn't matter if you're talking about religion or the government, the lack of knowledge will destroy you. So, it is our responsibility to not only teach our kids but to teach ourselves to feast upon the words of Christ.

I know that I don't open my scriptures enough. When they say feast upon the words it doesn't mean just read it, it means to study it and know what it's talking about. Rob (Rolfe), I just envy you because of the knowledge that you have but it's not because someone put this little plug into you and downloaded into you like in the movies, it's because you have studied it and you know what it says. It doesn't matter if it's studying the word or playing the piano or an instrument it's because of the time that people put into it.

I know that we need to focus on what we want. We need to keep our eye



on the target. I sit in the woods a lot of times with a pair of binoculars. Anybody that has actually sat in the woods will know what I'm talking about. I've been in the woods before and have seen something far away. Maybe 100 to 200 yards out but you have the woods between you and the object. When you look through the binoculars you have to look past everything in between and focus on the object you want to see. Zion is no different. We have to look past the world. We have to look past our jobs. We need to focus on Zion. Is there any hope for what we have?

The answer is yes there is. Doctrine and Covenants 12:3a-4a says, *Seek to bring forth and establish my Zion. Keep my commandments in all things; and if you keep my commandments and endure to the end, you shall have eternal life; which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God. And it shall come to pass, that if you shall ask the Father in my name, in faith believing, (There's so many times I go to God but is it really in faith believing?) you shall receive the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance, that you may stand as a witness of the things of which you shall both hear and see.*

On our own we have to make the decision of who we are going to serve. I know I talk about this a lot because I know that there's a lot that pulls us away. We get together every other Wednesday night in Boone for prayer service. We are not close to a lot of people but in the movie 'Courageous' there was a time when these men got together to pray with each other. I sit back and say I don't have anyone to pray with but last Sunday we were invited to my daughter's boyfriend's church and we went. Trust me they were not as social as you. They were not as welcoming. Matter of fact I don't think anyone really talked to us until I started talking to them but still people prayed there and we were able to pray together. You don't have to pray just with the people that go to your congregation. How awesome would it be to come together and share in prayer with other men?

In Joshua 24:15 it says, *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether*

the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. This is a big statement. My wife has a wood-burning plaque in the entryway of the house that says, 'And as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'

That means not just serving the Lord when it's convenient. I know that I don't commune with my God as much as I need to. It doesn't matter if you're 46 or 56 or 22 we all find reason to not spend time with God but if we keep our eyes on Zion and establishing the kingdom of God, guess what? Things will fall into place.

As I was watching the different movies that were going to be coming on there was a man that said, 'If you will not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.' If your faith is who you are and you won't stand for your faith, you'll fall for anything. That is so true. My prayer is that we would take the time to let our children know about God. I would pray that the children would understand that when Mom and Dad are sharing with them and are telling them 'no' or trying to explain things to them that they would look at them and understand that they are not doing it out of hate or being mean or because they don't understand what it was like to be young.

Trust me your parents remember what it was like. They know the things that they have gone through and they are trying to keep you from making a mistake. Yes you grow with the trial and tribulations you have but if your parents can keep you from going through those things or if they can teach you about the spiritual law maybe you will be a little further ahead than they are and you will be able to get a little further than I did.

I would pray that we would turn our lives over to God, that we would look to Zion and keep our focus there. Christopher is leaving to go to Kosovo here next Saturday. There are a lot of things in life that try to pull you away from Christ, but I would challenge you, Christopher, to read your scriptures.

When people ask you to go out to some place that you shouldn't go instead go and share with people that believe in Christ. I would say this to everybody. Instead of doing what the world wants you to do find somebody to share with because I know that there's people out there who are looking and people that need you. When you go through a tragedy and someone is sitting there and puts their hand out to help you remember that won't happen if you are sitting in a bar, that won't happen if you are out doing things you are not supposed to be doing with your friends. That will only happen if you are in the right spirit and the right frame of mind that someone can ask you for help.

Presider Michael Jordison than spoke again.

Steven called last night and asked if we could take a few moments this morning after his message to offer prayers on behalf of Chris as he leaves for Kosovo. As I thought about that I was reminded of the fact that every Sunday after the message there is a sending forth of each one of us. Many times we forget that.

We enjoy the good spirit that was shared and the message that we've heard but we forget that there's a calling and a response on our behalf to go forth out into the world. Sometimes that is to share with our co-workers, our friends at school or sometimes the person standing in the line at the grocery store next to us. Sometimes that is to go across the ocean to foreign lands and to meet with people that don't speak our language. Sometimes in that context also it's in response to our country to go to those places and help keep the peace and bring whatever it is that we can as individuals.

This morning I would like for our congregation to offer some prayers on behalf of Chris as he prepares to leave, prayers for strength, courage, guidance and wisdom as he goes to this new place for him. I would pray that the Lord will give him the words that he needs to share at the times that he needs to share them and that he can fulfill his purpose and his role as a servant in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. After the congregation has shared prayers



I would like to ask Brother Rob and Brother Alan if they would bless our brother as he prepares to leave on this journey. (Several in the congregation offered prayers for Chris and he was blessed by Brothers Rob and Alan.) Michael then read a scripture sending us forth to serve the Lord. *Then said I,*

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from

off the altar; And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (Isaiah 6:5-8)



Thanksgiving Calls Us To Free Others

**High Priest
Alan Smith
Mount Ayr, Iowa
November 28, 2013**

I'm very thankful to be with you this morning. We all have a lot to be thankful for, and in this time of thanksgiving I just want us to remind us to give thanks, just as the song Ron and Di Smith have just sung this morning. The whole reason for this season was for the country to take a moment and give thanks to God for the many blessings we have in our lives.

One of the things I'm thankful for this year is what is my current favorite scripture -- Isaiah 58. As I've read it over and over again, it has spoken to me about some of the great promises of the Lord and what he's asking us to do so we can have those promises in our lives. I'd like to share some of that with you this morning as we talk about Thanksgiving. I think the Lord is asking us to express our thanksgiving by making a difference in the lives of other people.

You see, I believe Isaiah was talking to people somewhat like us at times. We think we are doing pretty much what the Lord wants us to do, but somehow don't seem to have quite the relationship with God that we feel we should be having. I don't know if this is your ex-

perience or not, but I know it has been mine at times.

So the Lord sends Isaiah to the people with a message.

The Lord says to Isaiah:

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Isaiah 58:1

This is not always very popular, with us it it? To have someone point out what we are doing wrong. And Isaiah was to use anything but a still small voice in letting people know. The Lord wanted to make sure they got the message.

What is often our first response when challenged about something we are doing that isn't what it should be. As children, we often try to downplay the charges or try to show that we haven't been all bad. Or we try to challenge the authority of the person who has taken us to task.

Have you ever respond like that? Here's the response of the people of Isaiah's time to his words of counsel. The extra words are added to tell what was really trying to be said in this verse, according to a direct Hebrew translation of this passage.

Yet they (claim to) seek me daily, and (claim to) delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and (claim they) forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they (claim to) take delight in approaching to God.

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Isaiah 58:2-3

Hey, they respond. How can we be doing something wrong. We fast and pray, we keep the ordinances and we worship you. We are doing trying to be righteous. Why isn't the Lord blessing us with in the way we would like?

Isaiah answers:

Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all of our labors. Isaiah 58:3

Now Isaiah is getting to meddling. You mean we have to do more than just go through the motions. You mean we have give up the things we want to do, we have to stop laboring as we normally do, if we want to have a day where we focus on what you want us to do?

While you are fasting you are continuing to take pleasure in what pleases you and doing all the things you normally do, Isaiah tells them.

And "show religion" isn't what God is all about. God isn't looking for us to beat ourselves up with whips (like some religions do) or make big shows of what we do when we sacrifice things for him. He's not calling us to make a big show of fasting. That defeats the purpose.

"Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a



day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Isaiah 58:4-5

The Israelites had set apart a day of fasting. They went through the motions and public show of bowing down and sitting on sackcloth and ashes. Because they did this they felt that the Lord should answer. But at the same time, they were spending the time doing their own pleasure, working as usual, debating with one another, fighting with one another.

Isaiah asks them if they think this will be acceptable. Do we think it is acceptable?

If we're fasting and not getting the response we want, maybe we need to look at what we are doing.

But I hear myself saying, this can't reflect on us. We don't have a fast day like that. We don't do the sack cloth and ashes thing. I sure am glad the Lord isn't talking about us.

But then again, we have this day called Thanksgiving. It's a day set aside for us to give thanks to God for all the blessings he has given us. We won't be fasting, that's for sure. Just the opposite. But are we taking any time during the holiday which was designed for us to focus on God and his many blessings to do that? Or is the whole day spent in doing things for our own pleasure, celebrating the many blessings with a feast, but not spending much time really thanking the giver of the feast. Thanksgiving is becoming more of and more of a day of battling to get more things for ourselves and the people we love rather than to take time to thank God for our blessings.

Isaiah isn't saying that the sacrifice of a fast isn't good. He's saying that the fast, however, needs to be put to good purpose. If we are going to not eat in a fast, it shouldn't be just to not eat. And it certainly shouldn't be done in a sense of woe is me, I'm so afflicted. Look what I'm giving up. Surely the Lord will see this and bless me.

And how do we turn our sacrifice outward instead of inward? We can fast from our own selfishness and begin to

look at how we can help free others. Isaiah goes on to talk about that.

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Isaiah 58:6-7

We are truly fasting or sacrificial when we do things for others. I think Isaiah is speaking of bringing both physical and spiritual freedom in this promise. We are giving up something of ourselves because we have a vision of the needs others have for freedom and blessing in their lives. Is Isaiah plowing new ground when he says that our sacrifices need to lead to blessings to others as well as ourselves?

Jesus thought Isaiah knew what he was talking about. He quoted another chapter of Isaiah when he talked about what his mission was. If going to follow him, shouldn't it be our mission too?

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and as his custom was he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

And there was delivered unto him, the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and he sat down.

And the eyes of all those who were in the synagogue, were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. Luke 4:16-21 and Isaiah 60:1-3

Just like Isaiah was saying, Jesus was saying, if we are going to please father we have to come to a point where we are freeing other people. Whether this is introducing them to the Lord so he can lead them to new life or whether this is in physical ways, where we minister to those needs as followers of Christ, we are called to be people who free others from the things that are binding them that keep them from growing to be what God wants them to be.

(Here's a little aside I stumbled across while working on this sermon. In Isaiah 60:8 it says:

For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Was it any wonder that Jesus cleaned out the temple of the money changers who were robbing the people so they could provide the animals for their burnt offerings? If people had read all of Isaiah 60 they wouldn't have been surprised.)

We have the same kind of the teaching in the Book of Mormon when Jacob



Alan Smith



gave a sermon.

And, O that ye would listen unto the word of his commands, and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls.

Think of your brethren, like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all, and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you.

But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ, ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them, for the intent to do good; to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick, and the afflicted. Jacob 2:21-24

Again the same call. The work we do go get our daily bread isn't bad. We just need to focus what we receive in a way that we respond in love to those around us as well. If we are seeking to help others. God can really bless us if he can trust us to use the resources he gives us to help ease suffering of others.

So what are the blessings promised if the sacrifices we make in our life are so others are blessed. if we give up a meal in fasting so the funds can be used to help others get food, for example? If we will give up some time we would spend on ourselves to do something to help others? If we focus on trying to help others come to Christ?

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning,

and thine health shall spring forth speedily;

and thy righteousness shall go before thee;

the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.

Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer;

thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am." Isaiah 58:8-9

You remember that light that Christ asked each of us to hold up to the world. It won't be just a little candle light, it will break forth as morning. We will be blessed with health, direction safety and peace and whenever you come to the Lord seeing for him, he will say "Here I am." Would we like that relationship with the Lord. He says we have to be sacrificially living. If we respond with "Here I am" when he calls

on us to be about his work, then he will always respond when we seek him. What a promise. Can anyone here this morning find a blessing in that list they could be truly thankful for?

Isaiah doesn't stop there -- he offers some more conditions and some more blessings in his call for his people to respond.

If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; Isaiah 58:9-10

Take away the burdens in your relationships with others -- especially those close to you. Help carry the burdens so no one has to try to do it all by themselves. Be careful when we put forth our finger -- point at others as not being as good as we are -- seeing the mote in their eye instead of the lumber in our own. Stop being so vain -- so proud of ourselves -- be humble, and recognize where we stand in relationship with God. If we will yearn to feed the hungry and aid the afflicted at the same time. If we realize that God blesses us so we can bring blessing to others, he will bless us. And we can never get ahead of God when it comes to being blessed for our response.

King Benjamin says it best in my favorite sermon of Thanksgiving in Mosiah in the Book of Mormon.

I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole souls have power to possess, to that God who has created you, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another;

I say unto you, that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and art preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move, and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another;

I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole soul, yet ye would be unprofitable servants.

And behold, all that he requires of you, is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would

keep his commandments, ye should prosper in the land;

And he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments, he doth bless you, and prosper you.

And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.

And secondly: he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you, for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore, he hath paid you.

And ye are still indebted unto him; and are, and will be, for ever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast? Mosiah 1:52-59

Isaiah is reminding us of the same thing. And what will be the blessings if we learn to love each other and share the resources we have?

then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday;

How can be depressed if our darkest days are bright as noonday?

And the Lord shall guide thee continually,

How would you like to know your are being continually guided in what you should do for Him?

and satisfy thy soul in drought,

We will be able to thrive even when there is drought in the culture around us.

and make fat thy bones;

We will be healthy. I guess we won't have osteoporosis, for example.

and thou shalt be like a watered garden,

and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Can you imagine what that promise was like in a land where water was so important?

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places;

The kingdom we yearn for.

thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations;

Did you catch that, we can be a people like those at the time Christ visited the Americas to raise up generations that will respond in freedom to the Lord.

and thou shalt be called,

The repairer of the breach,



The restorer of paths to dwell in. Isaiah 58:10-12

What a beautiful promise. Do you see how the focus is on helping make a difference for others as well as receiving blessings in our own life? We need to sacrificially live to bless others just as we are thankful for the blessings we have received. In fact, that's the way we express our thanksgiving.

What would happen if those things could be said of us as individuals? For our branches here in Mount Ayr or in Osceola as a whole?

There's a whole other promise -- and sermon -- in rest of chapter, but I'll mention it in passing.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words;

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Isaiah 58:13-14

Here are some wonderful spiritual blessings waiting for us if we will keep the Sabbath holy.

Our fasting, our worship -- if we will do it the way the Lord wants us to do it -- sacrificial for a purpose, willing to go all out in giving him a day -- whether it is the Sabbath or spending more time in Thanksgiving on Thanksgiving Day -- we will be blessed.

I've been trying to experiment on the word and try to find ways for sacrificial love elements to be part of life each day -- trying to do something for others to try to help free them from something that is holding them back. I anticipate that the Lord will bless our branch as I try to do that.

This week I gathered the food for 15 families for Thanksgiving, using the offerings that you have made to this branch. Valle and I filled up the bags with all of the fixings for a Thanksgiving meal that will go with turkeys. Across the county, churches are helping 125 families this Thanksgiving.

This week I also went to a meet-

ing to see about helping families in the county at Christmas as well. I'll be bringing some information on that to you in the next week or two.

We are joining our resources together today to share in a Thanksgiving dinner open to everyone. We hope that is a blessing to each of us.

We have the service project of packing food for those who need it around the world once a year. We have oblation funds that we use to help people in need.

But are we living up to the challenge of Isaiah fully? What else should we be doing in our communities to help in these needs as they arise?

I spent much of the week working to help Valle's sister and brother-in-law get their finances in order after suffering a 40 percent cut in their modest income. You can imagine what that would be for most of us. It will take a big change in lifestyle for them as we try to free them from some of their debts. Valle's family are working together to try to free them from their oppression of debt.

They are going to have to take a new view of how they spend their money. They'll be able to live, but have to live without some of the things they had become used to. If we are going to live sacrificially, maybe we need to look at our lives and see what it is we need to change to respond to God's call more completely.

We are here this morning to remind us to give up our burdens to the Lord -- and if we need help, to call upon each other to help us find a better way to live. Let God help us find the way we can make changes in our lives so that we can be freed from some of the things which stand in the way of us living in kingdom relationships.

I don't know in are communities if there are areas we can take on to help free people. Maybe it is monetary problems. Maybe it is other things that we have resources that could be shared to help them find new ways of life. Maybe it's just in being better witnesses of the gospel, that an make amazing changes in our lives. How can we be a blessing. How can we do more of what the Lord is calling us to do so we can be blessed

with these rich blessings he wants us to have.

He promises to respond to our seeking him if we will help others find freedom and the oil of joy for mourning in their lives. Now I'm looking for the blessings that will come from these meager efforts in our lives. I'm assured that they will come.

In my life, it's been the times when I was faced with trying to bring ministry when I knew I was way out of my own league -- when I knew that I couldn't handle the situation without God -- that I've been blessed the most. Is it because I'm too comfortable in what I'm doing and not stretching so that I have to have God fill the void that my ministry isn't as blessed as God would want it to be.

I remember the time that Ray Holloway and I went to visit a member of the church. As we came in and visited at her invitation, she began speaking in tongues. We knew that the spirit that was around her was not the spirit of God. So we asked her if she could interpret the tongue in which she had just spoken.

She proceeded to do so, saying that God wanted her to divorce her husband and go to a Western land with another person and that God would bless her in this.

We knew that we were dealing with someone who had a spirit which was not the Spirit of God. We asked her if she would like to be administered to and she said yes. As we laid our hands on her head, we knew we were to cast out the spirit which was within her. We had never done anything like that. We didn't know for sure what we should do. But the power of the Spirit came over us and gave us the words to pray, and as we prayed the power of the spirit poured over her and we knew that the Lord had restored the right spirit in her. I had never felt the spirit in that power before and I knew that without it, the freeing blessing could not have occurred.

What challenge do we need to take on that will stretch us out of our comfort zones so we can experience the power of God in meeting those needs of those around us?



December Daily Scriptures

Day	Theme	Thoughts	Scripture
1	How was a sacrifice made in Biblical times?	What is sacrifice? For the Israelites it was defined as: An offering made to God by killing and burning some animal upon an altar, as an acknowledgment of his power and providence, or to make atonement for sin, appease his wrath or conciliate his favor, or to express thankfulness for his benefits. Sacrifices have been common to most nations, and have been offered to false gods, as well as by the Israelites to Jehovah. A sacrifice differs from an oblation; the latter being an offering of a thing entire or without change, as tithes or first fruits; whereas sacrifice implies a destruction or killing, as of a beast. Sacrifices are expiatory, impetratory, and eucharistical; that is, atoning for sin, seeking favor, or expressing thanks	Leviticus 23:5-8
2		The sacrifice to the Lord was made from the best. First fruits and unblemished lamb the very best. Do we sacrifice our best and first fruits? In a Christ centered life, the sacrifice is first and our best.	Leviticus 23:10-12
3		The Israelites fasted until the appointed time of sacrifice. This fast allowed the first fruits to be provided for the sacrifice. What can we delay to make a sacrifice of our first fruits?	Leviticus 23:14
4		The Israelites sacrificed to please the Lord, for sin, and peace. These were not small offerings but significant offerings to them. Think of the price of a kid of goat today. For many it would be a significant sacrifice to purchase even today.	Leviticus 23:17-20
5		Sacrifice also was made to feed the poor by not harvesting everything. It is interesting to note the poor would still need to come and gather in the field. This is what Ruth did to feed herself and her mother-in-law.	Leviticus 23:22
6		Failure to sacrifice had consequences. Have you failed to sacrifice at critical times? We all have missed opportunities to sacrifice but how do you correct the situation?	Leviticus 23:27-29
7		Part of the sacrifice was to concentrate on the Lord. This was done by limiting the activities and amount of work performed on a Sabbath.	Leviticus 23:33-36
8	Sacrifice is required for salvation	For our salvation, we must deny ourselves things of this world. If we become part of the world, we are not the Lord's people.	Titus 2:11-14
9		The importance of denying ourselves of the things of this world is shown by the repetitions in the Book of Mormon. How often are the important parts of the gospel repeated? The words may vary or be worded completely different but is the same message.	Moroni 10:29
10		What is value of your life? It is easy to measure your value in worldly goods. What is your spiritual value, the price of your soul? The value is great to the Lord and the adversary. How often do we cheapen the price of our soul to the adversary for worldly pleasure?	Mark 8:36-44
11	Sacrifice is a choice	It is important to remember we are free to chose who we receive. It is equally important to remember everyone has the same choice. There is no law against making the wrong choice but there are consequences.	Alma 16:7-10
12		We can choose light or darkness. To be healthy, we need light. Sun light to be physically healthy and God's light to be spiritually healthy.	Helaman 5:40-42
13		This is one of the boldest statements of choice in the scriptures. It is a challenge to all believers. The Israelites responded in unity, how would the church respond today?	Joshua 24:13-15
14	Sacrifice is an exercise of your agency	We have tasted the bitter and the sweet. Some people are always drawn to the bitter even when the sweet is nearer. They are agents unto themselves. Temporal is often thought of as dealing with worldly things but it also means a limited time. In this case, the commandments of God are without limit.	Genesis 6:57-58
15		Agency allows us to choose the type of life we will have. If we sacrifice in this life, we will not sacrifice our eternal life. If we fail to sacrifice in this life, we will sacrifice our eternal life.	Sec 28:9a-10d
16		Agency allows us to choose the type of life we will have. If we sacrifice in this life, we will not sacrifice our eternal life. If we fail to sacrifice in this life, we will sacrifice our eternal life.	2 Nephi 7:40
17	Sacrifice can bring celebration or persecution	Satan will always throw a stumbling block in the way of the righteous.	2 Timothy 3:12
18		Satan's singular goal is to separate us from God. Convincing us not to make sacrifices for God is one way to separate us.	Romans 8:35-36
19		It is a sacrifice to enter hostile areas for God. Have we done enough in our own neighborhoods?	Sec 96:1a-1c
20		A sacrifice of labor was celebrated by another sacrifice. There was a great joy in the people at the accomplishment made by the sacrifice.	Nehemiah 12:43-44
21		Paul had a joy of the service provide to God by the sacrifice of his labor. Do you find joy in sacrifice of your labor and time for the Lord?	Philippians 2:14-18
22		To be a good steward requires dedication to the stewardship. Does being a good steward bring joy to your life?	Sec 51:5b
23	Sacrifice is a stewardship	You cannot plant a single seed and plan to feed your family. It is not a good stewardship to trust in one sacrifice to provide eternal life.	2 Corinthians 9:6-7
24		To file a titing statement and pay your titing takes a sacrifice of time and money. This is a sacrifice many have been unwilling to make. Even in the good years only a small percentage of the saints filed titing statements and paid their titing.	Sec 101:2b-2c
25		Have you lent a hand to clean the church or keep it in good repair? It is a sacrifice and a stewardship to maintain church properties.	Sec 101:10a-10d
26	Sacrifice is a consecration	Giving property and money to the church is a sacrifice for the family. It is the sacrifice of the children's inheritance.	Sec 42:9a
27		We are all called to consecrate time and effort to the missionary work. The opportunity abounds to make a sacrifice of your time and efforts in your very own neighborhoods.	Sec 132:4
28		Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the service of the Lord. Think of the sacrifice Aaron and his sons were making to serve God.	Leviticus 8:29-35
29	Sacrifice is a way of life	One of the key points of the gospel is conversion to Christ. Although I was baptized at the age of 8, I did not convert to Christ until I was 24 years of age. At that time, my life became Christ centered. Being Christ centered means always seeking the narrow gate each and every moment. At times it seems like trying to thread the needle by throwing thread at eye. Christ helps if we listen.	Matthew 7:22-23 3 Nephi 6:25-26
30		Do you keep your repentance up to date? We keep a lot of worldly items up to date but do we neglect the spiritual items like our own repentance. We need to remember we can all stumble but continued repentance is the way to allow the Lord to reach down and pick us up, brush us off, and place us back on the path.	Jacob 4:16
31		We can only move forward in the work of the Lord when we have his light. We must seek that light by entering into the narrow gate and always continuing on the old old path.	3 Nephi 13:11

I hope you will read over Isaiah 3 again this week. What does it say to you? Maybe some of the things it said to you you won't find. Maybe the Lord will reveal something more to you in your study. I hope you will be looking for ways that our branch can help meet the needs of those around us in new ways.

As you share in Thanksgiving for the blessings in your lives in this season, I think the Lord is calling us to be more sacrificial people. May it be said about us:

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. That is my prayer.



From There Where Shepherds By Nathan Smith

*See the shepherds
Praising God and telling everyone
the news
They have seen him
All the angels said was true.
As the night turned to morning the
heralds of the savior's birth
Were the shepherds
Honest people who could recognize
In the stable
They had seen the lamb of God
Jesus Christ*

*Gloria in excelsis deo
Gloria, Gloria
Gloria in excelis deo
Gloria
Gloria*



December 2013

Sunday Schedule

	Dec. 1	Dec. 8	Dec. 15	Dec. 22	Dec. 29	Jan. 5
Presiding	Rob Rolfe	Steve Cunningham	Rodney Bastow	Sherman Phipps	Ron Smith	Alan Smith
Speaking	Gordon Winkler	John Mundy	Ed Anderson	Ron Smith	MUSIC SERVICE	Rob Rolfe
Pianist	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke
Special Music	Beth Knotts	Rob Rolfe	Michael Jordison	Lynda Rolfe		Steve Smith
Family Devotions	Alan Smiths	Steve Smiths	Jim Barbers	Ed Andersons	Sue Beck	Steve Cunninghams
Greeters	Michael Jordisons	George Knotts	Sherman Phipps	Bob Rowland	Rob Rolfe	Ron Smith
Custodians	Rob Rolfes	Rodney Bastows	Sherman Phippses	Alan Smiths	Ron Smiths	Jim Barbers
Sunday Evening	Norman Nelsons	Rob Rolfes	Bob Rowlands	Ron Smiths	Steve Smiths	Rob Rolfes

Wednesday Night Prayer Service Schedule

	Dec. 4	Dec. 11	Dec. 18	Dec. 25	Jan. 1	Jan. 8
Location	Ron Smiths	Gordon Winkler	Steve Smiths	Rob Rolfes	Bob Rowlands	Alan Smiths
Presiding	Ed Anderson	George Knotts	Alan Smith	Michael Jordison	Sherman Phipps	Steve Smtih

SPECIAL EVENTS

Sunday, Dec. 1 -- Priesthood Meeting at 8:30 a.m., Potluck dinner.

Sunday, Dec. 15 -- **Caroling Party** at 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 31 -- **New Year's Eve Party** at 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 5 -- Priesthood Meeting at 8:30 a.m., Potluck dinner, **Budget Business Meeting** following potluck

Happy Birthday: Ruth Thomas (3), George Galusha (12), Erika Clisby (15), Cathy Nelson (16), Cheryl Phipps (24), Di Smith (26), Jennifer Rowland (30) and any others we missed.

Happy Anniversary: Rodney and Debbie Bastow (27) and any others we missed.

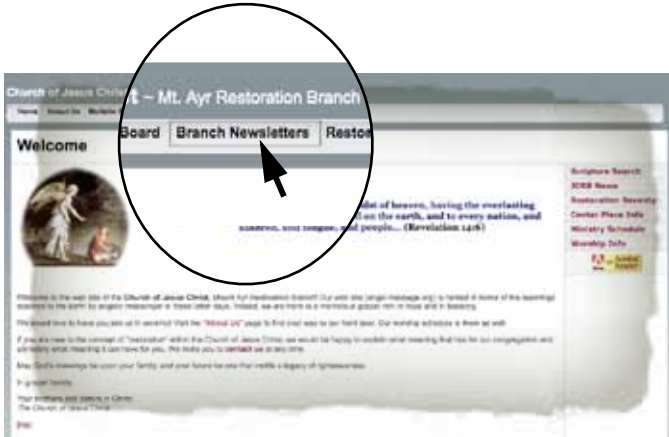


Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps
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Lamoni, IA 50140

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CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST - MT AYR RESTORATION BRANCH

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

News & Notes

Continued from front page

Branch business meeting

A branch business meeting to discuss the budget for the new year will be held Sunday, Jan. 5, following the pot-luck dinner.

Witnessing weekend

A witnessing weekend is tentatively scheduled to be held at the Bell, MO branch the weekend of January 10-12.

Ron Smith is organizing the event.

Branch retreat

A branch retreat will be held at Lucas on the weekend of February 28-March 1. We hope everyone will put that weekend down on their schedules.

We are looking forward to a wonderful time together at the campgrounds there. If it is snowy, there are plenty of snow activities to take part in as well.