



Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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greatest
gift



News & Notes

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Graduations set

Seniors Teegan Rowland and Gable Galusha will be graduation from Lamoni High School Saturday, May 17, and will be hosting parties to which the branch is invited.

We will have a potluck dinner on Sunday, May 18, to recognize the graduates as well.

Retreat planned

We will have an archeological dig retreat at Nauvoo, IL on the weekend of

June 6-8.

We will meet Friday night at the Nauvoo House, take part in an archeological dig on Saturday and share the Sunday service with the Nauvoo branch.

We will be staying in the Nauvoo House and food will be provided.

Let Steven Smith know if you plan to attend. T-shirts will be provided but we need sizes.

We will be having a service of sharing music and testimonies, so prepare to

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MAKING CHOICES

Priest Jim Barber
Bethany, MO
June 2, 2013

Priest Ed Anderson shared John 10:1-4 as a Call to Worship. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice.*

Priest Jim Barber shared Genesis 7:39-40 for his scripture reading. *The Lord said unto Enoch, Behold, these thy brethren, they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their intelligence in the day that I created them. And in the garden of Eden gave I unto man his agency; and unto thy brethren have I said, and also gave commandment, that they should love one another; and that they should choose me their Father.*

This morning I guess the title of my talk would be "Making Choices." Ever since God gave us our agency we've had to make choices. Sometimes we've made good choices and sometimes we've made bad ones. As we all know we were created even before Adam was placed on the earth in the spirit world. So I guess if you want to really look at that in God's eyes we're the same age as Adam so whenever Rob (Rolfe) says that he's older than dirt he might be right. Actually if we look at it the way that we should look at it our time begins when we're born so we're not all the same age except in God's eyes.

We know that Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden because they made the wrong choice but this was all planned out. Adam and Eve were taught then from the Garden of Eden by the Spirit of God the same as we are

taught. Think about the Spirit of God or Jesus or God and all that He stands for but then think about Satan and all that he stands for. You would think that it would be a simple choice to follow God because if we follow Satan it's downhill all the way until we're cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

Satan has been granted the access to tempt us and to encourage us follow him and we have to make the decision if we want to follow him or follow Jesus. Even though it looks black and white sometimes it isn't. There's always that gray area.

When we had our Witnessing Weekend last month I spent some time with Dave Drummond and we were talking about the gray area. It's Satan's goal to give us half-truths or give us a little bit of light but it's not quite the same and that's where that gray area comes in. Satan tries to conceal God's blessings by saying, 'Oh, that's just something that happened to you. It's not really God that's doing this. You were just lucky.' We know that that's wrong.

He also tries to make Christian living seem like a sacrifice. We have to get up Sunday mornings to go to Church and we have to go to prayer services on Wednesday night and services on Sunday evening but that's not a sacrifice that's a joy.

Sometimes Satan tells us it's OK to sin just a little. When I was a kid growing up I always told little white lies to keep Mom or Dad from finding out what I'd done but it seemed like it never worked. They always found out. Satan also tells us that there isn't really a God and there's no kingdom. He even tries to convince us that there's no devil but we have to be in control of our decisions and look at that gray area and decide whether it's right or whether it's wrong.

When you choose God and you give yourself to Christ and accept whatever He brings into your life, then you will truly know God. There's a scripture in

John 17:3 that says, *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

I'd like to talk about some steps that we have to go through to get to that position where we know God. First, we have to believe in God. We have to know that He exists and we do that through our faith. Faith is a seed that is planted within us and we have to nurture that seed. We have to study and try to do God's will. When I think about faith I think about the faith that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had. They would not bow down to the idol that the king worshipped and wanted them to worship also. They refused to do that so the king said that if they wouldn't he would have to cast them into the fiery furnace. They seemed to be OK with that but why? I wouldn't want to be cast in there but they knew that God would be there to take care of them.

We know from the scriptures that when they were cast into the furnace the king could see into the furnace and he saw not just the three of them but a fourth. How great would it be to have that faith?

I'm also reminded of the story of Esther. Her people were being trodden down and weren't very happy so she went into the king to plead for her people. If you remember if you went in to the king unannounced was death but she wasn't afraid. She exercised her faith and we have to do that too. We have to exercise our faith.

As God comes to us and we draw near to Him it's kind of like climbing a mountain top. When we start going up we're looking up to God. We get higher and higher and see other people that are looking to God too and we all come together. Sometimes we can turn around and look back down and see what's behind us. Sometimes when I look back down and see what's behind me I wonder how I ever got up the mountain.

I haven't always made the right



choices but through God's plan we can repent of those times. We have to learn to love each other too. Jesus two commandments were to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, might, mind and strength and the second commandment was to love your neighbor as yourself.

As we come together and start climbing that mountain we see other people and we want them to come and join us. I think that's what true love is it is wanting to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with others so that they can receive that too, that joy that we have within our heart.

As I mentioned before we have to repent. In Genesis 5:1-2 it says, *And the Lord God called upon men, by the Holy Ghost, everywhere, and commanded them that they should repent; And as many as believed in the Son, and repented of their sins, should be saved. And as many as believed not, and repented not, should be damned. And the words went forth out of the mouth of God, in a firm decree, wherefore they must be fulfilled.* That means not doing wrong again. There's a difference between just admitting that you've done wrong and not wanting to do it again.

I remember lots of times when I would get into trouble and my Mother would ask me if I was sorry and of course I was sorry. But then she would ask are you sorry because you did it or sorry because I caught you doing it. Those are two different things. If you are really sorry that you did something you probably aren't going to do it again. I'm kind of bad about that too. I promise that I am not going to do that again and then I ended up doing it again but God has a plan for us and hopefully we can repent of those sins and come close to Him.

A very important step in coming to God is being baptized. Baptism to a lot of people is a lot different than it used to be. Some people say that there's no reason to be baptized. It's just something that was in the past, but that's not true. Remember the story of how Jesus was baptized? Who did Jesus go to to be baptized? He went to John the Baptist. Why did He go to John? He had

the authority to baptize. That's one very important thing.

Not all people that perform baptisms have the authority to baptize. The authority doesn't come from some theology school where you go to become a minister. This authority comes from God and that's where John's authority came from. Josh (Jordison), who baptized you? He answered, 'My Dad.' Did he have the authority to baptize you? He responded, 'Yes.' Where did his authority come from? He answered, 'God.'

We have the authority through the priesthood but some people ask how you get that authority because a lot of people don't think that Christ talks to us today. They say He has done His job and that we're out here on our own and there's no need for priesthood. There again that's in the gray area. Satan has tried to intervene here and say there's no need of priesthood authority but we have to follow God's word.

You can't follow God's words unless you read them. Read the story of how Jesus was baptized. It also says that He went down into the water and came up out of the water totally cleansing Himself. Then as He came up out of the water the dove came and baptized Him with the Spirit because there was no man on the earth at that time that had the authority to baptize by the Spirit. They had lost that when Moses was taken from the earth because there was no longer a Melchisedec priesthood on the earth until Christ came again. There is a right way and a wrong way and we won't know the right way and the wrong way until we study God's words.

It seems like today that the word of God doesn't mean much. People are falling away from the word of God. Some people say that after Jesus was baptized we didn't need to be baptized but if that's true why did He send His disciples to baptize? In Matthew 28:18 He says, *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* This was after Jesus' baptism. If He did it all for us and we don't have to do that why did He send His disciples out to baptize? There again we have to

read His words.

After Christ established His church baptism continued for five centuries and then the changing of the ordinance of baptism helped bring about the downfall of the church and the great apostasy so it has happened before that people have fallen away. Now His priesthood has been restored and there are still people that are falling away. Baptism is just the beginning too.

I was reading in a book that compared baptism to walking a plank on a teeter totter. I used to do that when I was a kid. I'm afraid to do it now because I'd probably fall off and break an arm. When you start walking up the teeter totter you get to the center and then it goes over. If you're really good you can stand there and balance it completely. That's the pivot point and baptism is our pivot point and we need to go up from there. We need to continue to call upon God.

Another thing I wanted to talk about was why we have the baptism of the spirit. For one thing when Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden



Jim Barber



they no longer had the spirit. They had a spiritual death. Baptism of the spirit brings that spirit back into our lives and allows it to work within us. Baptism is a contract we sign with God giving Him permission to work in our life and now we are God-directed instead of self-directed. We are directed toward the Kingdom of God instead of seeking glory for ourself, or even worse, achieving a place in hell. The Holy Spirit will lead us all the way to the Celestial Kingdom if we will continue to walk with Him.

We all have to make choices, every one of us. We got a phone call the other morning from a gentleman that we went to church with years and years ago.



New website

The Mount Ayr Restoration Branch has a new website. We missed renewing the old one domain name -- angel_message.org -- and so have a new site to visit.

Come to:

www.gospelrestored.org
for back copies of the newsletter and other information about what is going on in the branch.

You can share the site with friends who may want to be able to read the current newsletter and past newsletters on line as well.

We are sorry for any confusion for people who have been to the old website location and not found us.

He's had a lot of trials in his life since we went to church with him. His wife had passed away a year or so ago. He told us that last Christmas he was all alone. He went to church and came home and got to thinking about all the things that had happened to him and he was very down. He didn't think he wanted to live any longer. He said he was about to climb the ladder and put the rope around his neck when somebody came to the door. That's pretty low.

This gentlemen talked to him and got him going back to church. The reason that he called me was he was on seventh heaven because he had found someone and he was going to get married again. He said he asked his wife right before she died if she wanted him to get married again. She told him that he couldn't live alone. She knew him well enough that she knew he couldn't live alone. She told him not to worry she would be waiting for him on the other side. I thought that was a wonderful testimony that finally God had sent someone to him to keep him from making a very bad choice.

Sometimes we don't recognize where all the blessing come from. We keep thinking it's just one of those things. It's because I'm living a good life that I'm being blessed. You are being blessed but it's not just because you are living a good life. It's because God is working with you. We need to give God the honor and the glory for everything that happens to us. As we face problems each day and call upon God a lot of those problems are going to be eliminated.

I guess in conclusion what I'd like for you to remember is that we need to make good or right choices. God gave us our agency and He wants us to choose Him. I've used this scripture a lot of times but it's something I try to remember every day. It's from Joshua 24:15: *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.*



Bartimus

God, grant to us Thy blessed Gift again,
To walk with us, as once in Galilee --
Talking of pebbles, and of birds o'erhead;
Of little children, and our daily bread --
To us, Thy lowly fisher-folk! Make plain
The shining wonder of Yourself again
That we may touch the seamless garment's hem,
And be made whole of selfishness and sin;
Behold, the hearts made humble and contrite --
Lord, that we may at last receive our sight!

-- Laura Simmons



CHANGING THE WORLD

High Priest Alan Smith Mount Ayr, Iowa April 13, 2014

This morning I would like to talk about people changing the world. It's Easter season and we understand that what went on in this week almost 2000 years ago changed the world.

Lot of writers who have provided lists of the effect Jesus had on the world. Some lists are better than others.

One writer put it this way:

"Throughout history, the influence Jesus had on the lives of people has never been surpassed. No other great leader has inspired so many positive changes in the lives of his followers."

People who encounter the risen Christ are totally transformed. Their outlook on life is altered forever. Staying true to their faith, they do not hesitate to face hardship, persecution and even death. Many devote their lives to serving others, minimizing their own needs and desires."

John Ortberg, a Presbyterian pastor, wrote a book on "Six Surprising Ways Jesus Changed the World." I'd just like to list those briefly this morning. He includes the view of children, education, compassion, humility, forgiveness and humanitarian reform as differences Jesus made in the world.

One that stuck out at me as I was reading through them was the view of children:

"In the ancient world children were routinely left to die of exposure -- particularly if they were the wrong gender); they were often sold into slavery. Jesus' treatment of and teachings about children led to the forbidding of such practices, as well as orphanages and godparents. A Norwegian scholar named Bakke wrote a study of this impact, simply titled: "When Children Became People: the Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity."

We don't understand what a difference Jesus made in how people thought about children. When he called those little children to be blessed and talked

about their importance, it wasn't just a nice thing, he was teaching the culture the value of children. (It's too bad in our world today that we haven't learned those lessons in terms of how we do away with millions of children through abortion.)

Jesus made a difference. He changed the world with his coming.

To me, one of the key differences in the world from Jesus is hope. Hope for eternal spiritual salvation. Hope for temporal salvation here on earth. The understanding that we can live here in the same kind of relationships we will have when we move on to eternity. Hope that the things we do can make a difference.

The idea, as summed up by the Apostle Paul in Romans when he says:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

How can all things work together for our good. Because Jesus knows our lives and our choices and how those can impact what's going to come and how those can be changed for good, if we need that done in our lives.

Interestingly enough, this concept is reflected in revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants with the same wording:

Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly, and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another. Doctrine and Covenants 87:6e

If we will search, pray and believe, Jesus can make all things work together for our good.

Here's another one:

The Lord hath sworn and decreed that they shall be granted; therefore, he giveth this promise unto you, with an immutable covenant, that they shall be fulfilled, and all things wherewith you have been afflicted, shall work together for your good, and to my name's glory saith the Lord. DC 95:1c

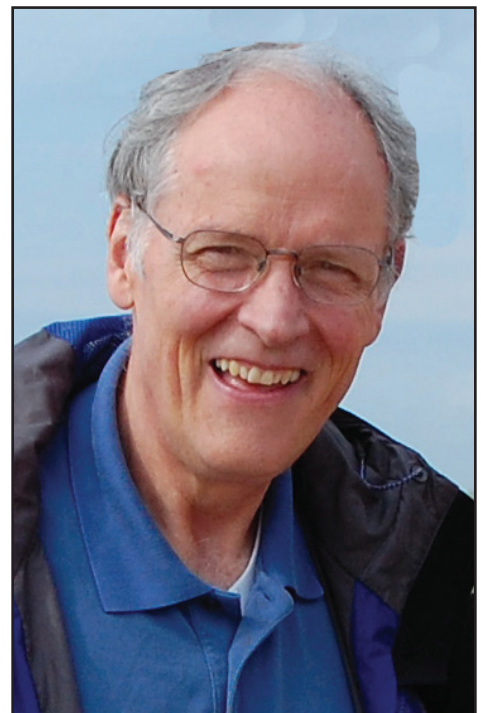
We have hope that even in our af-

flictions the Lord can make all things work for our good. When we understand God's plan, we see that Jesus had to be crucified and take on him our sin so that there was hope for us. Even the horrible things that happened to Jesus in the scourging and crucifixion, he brought about a wonderful gift to us of the ability to be forgiven.

Jesus life and death give us hope that we can change. That's one big difference. We don't have to get caught up in Satan's lie that we can't change, that we have no value and that we cannot be forgiven.

This was followed by his resurrection, which took away the sting of death, helping us understand that life on earth is just the beginning of our story. There is an eternity ahead of us, and our probationary time here on earth is designed for us to learn how to love so that we can be in the presence of love forever.

In the Restoration our belief in how he changed the world goes even further. Not only is there a spiritual salvation that Jesus came to the world to



Alan Smith



bring, but the fullness of the gospel lets us know that we are to be working that his kingdom, with all its blessings. This is something we can actually have here among us on earth. We are told to be working together to develop the kind of sacrificial love that his kingdom can be seen on earth as well as in heaven.

The hope, in times we live in which there seems to be so much wickedness in the world, is that we too can make a difference in the world. We too can be a blessing.

The concept that all things can work together for good says that despite what seems like randomness in the world, God's plan is being worked out.

I think its interesting when Jesus was talking about how much he knows -- about how much he cares for us. This is from

Mathew 10: 25-27:

And fear not them who are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father knoweth it.

And the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.

The message here is there is nothing so insignificant that God is not aware of it, whether it be the least valuable bird or a hair from our heads. The sparrows sold very cheaply because they were so plentiful, but God had each of them counted.

Not only that, but the very hairs of our head are numbered. I thought, I wonder how many hairs we lose in a lifetime? So I got out my iPad and Googled it. Someone on the internet says it's about 100 hairs a day, so someone who lives to be 75 has lost somewhere in the neighborhood of 2.7 million hairs in their lifetime. And Jesus has each one of those counted.

Can you imagine what it's like to count 100 hairs falling for every person in the world every day. With the world's current population, that's 680 billion a day. (That's getting up in high numbers like the national debt.)

In other words, Jesus is telling us not that he is necessarily counting every 680 billion hairs, though that's what he said, but that he's watching over us and interested in everything that happens to us. And we are given opportunities to make a difference that will lead to blessings for others if we are trying to follow him.

If God knows about all of those insignificant things, surely he can use the choices we make individually to lead to his work being accomplished in the aggregate. He can tell us that he is going to overcome -- what the outcome is going to be -- without taking away our choice to follow him.

If we make a decision not to take an opportunity to be a blessing in someone's life, someone else may have to make a decision to be that blessing for his ultimate purpose to come to pass. But the final outcome is not in doubt.

While Christ is probably the ultimate in terms of humans changing the world, others do that as well.

I heard a story related by Andy Andrews about how seemingly random choices made by different people can lead to a magnificent result. He retells the story for children in the book "The Boy Who Changed The World" that I would like to share with you this morning.

(The book tells the story of Norman Bourlag, who discovered ways to breed wheat, triticale, rice and other crops to help them produce better yields -- saving an estimated two billion lives over the years for people who otherwise would have starved.

Then it goes back to people who made choices that lead to Bourlag being able to do what he did and asks who is really the one that changed the world.

It tells the story of Henry Wallace, who grew up and started the company that hired Bourlag and asked him to do the research that changed the world.

Then it tells the story of George Washington Carver, who took the young Henry Wallace on walks in the woods and taught him a love for plants that spurred him on to become secretary of agriculture and vice president

of the United States before starting the company that hired Bourlag.

Then it tells the story of Moses Carver, who traded his best horse to save the life of George Washington after he had been kidnapped with his mother by Raiders on the Missouri frontier and adopted him as a son, adding the Carver to his name.

The books ends up this way:

"That means every little thing you do matters: what you do tomorrow. God made your life so important that every move you make, every action you take, matters . . . and not only for you or the people around you. Everything you do matters for everyone and for all time! When you think about that. . . Wow! That means you can be the kid who changes the world!"

Tom Morain from Graceland University has given another branch of the story as well, adding a girl who changed the world into the mix.

The story begins in the Farm House on the campus of Iowa State University in Ames. Shortly after the Civil War, Professor Joseph Budd and his family moved into the Farm House. Joseph Budd was a professor of horticulture at Iowa State. He had a daughter named Etta May.

"After studying art in the East, Etta Budd returned to the midwest to teach art at Simpson College in Indianola. There she met a young black man, the son of former slaves. He was enrolled in one of her art classes. He loved to paint, especially still life paintings of plants and flowers. He was also a good gardener. Etta Budd helped him find gardening jobs with families around Indianola. The young man's name was George Washington Carver.

"As his friend and art teacher, Etta Budd took Carver aside one day and urged him to study something besides art. Etta told him he could never support himself or a family with his artwork. Instead of painting plants, she encouraged him to study them. She offered to go with him to Iowa State where her father was a professor. After thinking about it, Carver agreed to enroll at Iowa State.

"Some time later, Etta visited



George Washington Carver at Ames. There she discovered something that made her very unhappy. Because Carver was black he had to eat his meals in the kitchen rather than the dining hall with the other students. This was unacceptable to Etta. She brought him into the dining hall where the white students took their meals. There she ate with him until the other students accepted him.

“At Iowa State Carver was a brilliant biology student. He even took graduate work and upon graduation, was offered a teaching position. He was the first black teacher that Iowa State had ever hired.”

We never know how the things we do will have an effect for changing the world.

So as people who have been changed by the life of Jesus that we celebrate this Easter season, how are we going to change the world? What this story tells me is that we may never know. An action we do today may help

save the world generations from now. We just need to keep trying to do our best to love others -- and help open their eyes to their possibilities for who they can become. That's just what Jesus did for us.

Sometimes we let ourselves get blinded by what others see in us. We get blinded by the world and think the things we say or the things we do only affect us. What we do may affect what happens in the whole world if we trace the story. We can be apart of what Jesus wants us to accomplish -- or we may make another branch of effects accomplish what we could do for him.

He took fishermen, tax collectors and the like and helped turn them into fishers of men -- and disciples of his that would help take his gospel to the world so his sacrifice for us would never be forgotten. What Jesus brought out in each of them was then shared with other people down to our day.

On this Palm Sunday, we don't want to be in the crowd that gives lip service to shout “Hosannah” when we think Jesus is going to save us in our sin and then shout “Barabas” when we see that he wants to save us from our sin.

My prayer is that each of us will find a way to do the little things that will help change the world -- even though we may never know what that thing we said, that smile we gave, that word of encouragement we offer will do. We know that if we are trying to do the things that our Lord calls us to do that we can be part of the task to change the world -- to make his kingdom a reality among us, to have his spirit to guide us and direct us, to see that his work is accomplished in our day.

Remember that all things we do can be used for good for them that love the Lord. What a wonderful blessing to know if we are trying to do his will that we will change the world.



JOURNEY TO THE RESURRECTION

High Priest Joel Loving
Mount Ayr, Iowa
April 20, 2014

Seventy Ron Smith opened the Easter service with the following Call to Worship. *Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher, and two angels standing by it in shining garments. And they entered into the sepulcher, and not finding the body of the Lord Jesus, they were much perplexed thereabout; And were affrighted, and bowed down their faces to the earth. But behold the angels said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is*

not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee.

Brother Joel Loving continued in Luke for his scripture reading. *He is not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again? And they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women who were with them, who told these things unto the apostles. (5-9)*

I want to invite you on a journey with me. This is the greatest example of love probably in the history of hu-

mankind. Right now as we experience what is about to happen our hero of this story, the story of unprecedented love is about to pay an enormous price for virtue. Listen carefully. (Alan Smith pounds nails into a cross.)

I don't know how you feel when you hear those nails being pounded. This is an amazing story. This is an amazing journey I asked you to take with me this journey to the resurrection. It begins here for us today in this unbelievable act when those nails, in that time, were actually going through flesh because of your sin and my sin.

The cost was enormous and the contrast really couldn't be more vivid. We raise Him in this fashion on Calvary so that He can raise us in Heaven. The scriptures in the gospels don't really talk much about what we just experienced,



this crucifixion, the nailing in His hands or palms. I'll just simply quote very briefly, *And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors; one on the right hand, and the other on the left.* (Luke 23:34)

Now I don't like to spend a lot of time on the cross. I want you to see this picture. This is Cindy my older sister. I put it up here because I want you to notice very closely that there's something going on. She has very thick eyeglasses. She was really born blind which was the result of our mother going to the grocery store and contracting rubella, German measles, when she was three months pregnant.

Now the reason I have this up here is because Cindy was my older sister, and I learned to see the world through her blindness. I learned how to perceive the world through the eyes of a blind child. It's different. She became, for me, this person who was rejected a great deal by humanity, by the normal way a child would go through school and her own life. I'm anxious to tell you the story ends well here but learning to see the world through a blind child's eyes has changed me in my perception and in my discernment. On this journey I want you to learn to see things differently than you would have with your normal and natural eyes.

This is participatory. What do you see? (A picture of an empty tomb was put on the screen.) An empty tomb, right? Now when you see this with new eyes I think you'll understand with me. This is a picture we could say of an empty tomb. It represents emptiness, or absence, something that is gone. Maybe even quantified as zero. Nothingness, absence and yet what does it mean when we see it in a new way on this journey, this journey to the resurrection. I think it means not absence but presence. I think it's not empty but it's full of meaning, powerfully meaningful for you and me.

I think we need to reexamine perhaps on our journey and the journey of life what really is present. For this represents an explosion in the Holy Spirit and the Comforter around the world. It

is not just an empty tomb. It is a representation of this fullness of the love which is surrounding and permeating life.

On this journey just a few days ago Christ stopped in the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples to pray by Himself. The scriptures say it this way. *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly; and he sweat as at were*

great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Luke 22:41-44) You see this picture (A picture of Jesus kneeling in the Garden was put on the screen) and you see with your natural eyes but I want you to see it anew, with new eyes, new perception, new discernment from the Holy Spirit, new divine inspiration perhaps.

I want to tell you a story from my life of one who was rejected but remained compassionate... gave the way that Jesus has shown us. This story takes place in Little Elm which is down south of the Texas border. I taught fifth grade there and there was a woman who was not handsome to look at. She was not pretty at all. She had offered to come and be a teacher's aide in another fifth grade. The kids were so frightened of her because of the disfigurement in her face so she wasn't accepted as a teacher's aide, but she went on with her life.

As a backdrop to this story the



Pastor Alan Smith pounds a nail in a cross as part of the sermon for Easter Sunday morning.

PTA and the faculty had not been getting along. There had been a history of some hurt feelings and betrayals so there was this circumstance where the relationship between them was adrift and needed some repair.

There was something called a Sunshine Committee that was secretly formed by some people who had begun to do some things for the faculty. On Friday afternoons when teachers would go to the lounge and to their cubbyhole they would find all kinds of goodies with nice things said about them, very affirming wonderful cards, cookies and that sort of thing. The topic around the faculty lounge was who was the Sunshine Committee? They wanted to know who was on this committee so that they could thank them.

The Sunshine Committee kept doing this week after week and then there was more than just goodies, there were loaves of bread and muffins and things



that showed up on a regular basis in the teachers' boxes. The teachers were still in this sort of asking, 'who is doing this, what's happening,' and they finally realized that it was the PTA. The PTA was bridging and doing all these kind things for the teachers affirming them which is so important. The relationship with the PTA began healing with the faculty.

This went on throughout the year. Sometime in the spring we found out that this woman who had tried to become a teacher's aide had contracted cancer. In a very short time she passed away. It was just a matter of weeks really from the time we found out. We were very concerned about her daughter who was a very sweet wonderful child and had a wonderful heart. She was gone for about a week and then she came back.

When she came back the fifth grade teachers were meeting in the classroom. I remember the daughter came in to this room. We were trying to be really sensitive and kind and she said, 'I know you're going to miss the bread and the goodies and I want to just say I'm sorry that we won't be able to do that anymore.' We said, 'What are you talking about?' She said, 'Didn't you know that was my mother who was providing all of that to the teachers? She was the one.'

We looked at each other and said, 'That wasn't the PTA? That wasn't the PTA that helped us affirm one another and heal one another?' The problem was fixed without knowing who was really behind the whole thing. This rejected person who chose in compassion to serve us, to love us anyway is a powerful indicator and example of this journey to the resurrection with Christ.

I have one more quick story here. I don't want to steal Alan's thunder. He's going to tell you in time, maybe even in story form, maybe in a book if our prayers are answered an amazing story of a prisoner who I believe had been falsely accused. He lived in solitary confinement for almost two years. His scriptures had been taken away from him. Now imagine this. This man was in prison by himself without his scriptures seeking to live life in a meaningful fashion. I won't go through the whole story because I really want Alan to tell

it more completely and fully but this much I want you to know as you look at this picture. (The picture of Jesus in the Garden praying)

There are a number of examples in this man's life over this period of two years where he experiences forgiveness, where he not only is forgiven but offers forgiveness. At some point he is given back his scriptures and when he is given them back he opens them to the book of Luke to this scene when Christ separates Himself from the apostles and goes off to pray.

In the depth of his incarceration and humility and meekness a vision opens up to him and he sees this moment. He's there. He's present and what he sees if I understand the story right is Christ walking away and time stops. In those moments when time stops, He prays for every single human being including you. He prays for you by your name. He prays for your parents. He prays for your grandparents. He prays for your children and your grandchildren even the ones yet unborn. In the scripture he prays so much that blood comes through his pores.

This journey to the resurrection helps us understand that we aren't seeking justice here, folks. I want to say this very clearly but very tenderly. Justice is a big cause today. We're all for social justice and I understand that but I also want to say these are not stories of justice. What happened to Jesus, what happened to Cindy, what happened to the prisoner, what happened to this compassionate bread maker were not episodes of justice. They were not fair. In fact, had they been fair they wouldn't have happened. I want to say this in clear tones. Justice is the wrath of God. Justice would have prevented the crucifixion. Justice is something that none of us, not one of us in this room or probably on this planet will shout for at our judgment bar. Do you want what's fair... because it wipes out what happened not only to these people but to Jesus?

Salvation relies on the injustice of this travesty, this tragedy. It's a testimony of the power of the transforming grace of God that this act is able to be for us salvation. Imagine how He is at His

best when we have been at our worst.

I want to talk about something that in my preparation the Spirit sort of laid on me. I don't know if some of you are hurting but I want you to know if you are you are not alone. You are not isolated and you may be asking why or what happened. These are the very same questions that the Lord dealt with.

I remember walking into the living room of a family where the husband and father and brother and son of the people present in that room had just committed suicide. There were blank stares on their faces. It was sort of like they were zombies. They just had that blank stare. You know what I am talking about when tough stuff happens. Here's the way I'd like to explain it. Listen carefully especially if you're priesthood and you are in homes bringing ministry. T

here is something that I like to call the 'hope bridge.' The hope bridge is something all of us have. It's the things we look forward to in our lives. The things that we anticipate, the dreams we have, the visions, the hopes. There is something ahead beyond today that I'm looking forward to this week or to-



Joel Loving



morrow or next month or next year, the hope of my family or marriage or relationships. Everyone has a hope bridge, those things that we plan on and rely on as we move forward in life. Sometimes the bridge collapses. Such was the case of this family. The wife is thinking, 'What will happen now? Will we lose the home?' The children are thinking, 'I have no father? No more times on Saturday together?' The parents who are never prepared to lose a child are thinking, 'What will become of us? How will we continue moving forward?' They are in free fall because the bridge has collapsed.

Such was the case with the disciples. 'Where do we go from here?' Or maybe with the way Christians Churches are today we're looking forward to this wonderful kingdom and yet we're in somewhat weakened states in various ways. I really don't want to speak of the Restoration Church so much. I can tell you having come from the Community of Christ we need a hope bridge of magnificent proportions -- becoming one with Jesus Christ. He is the hope bridge builder. He is the only one qualified to move us from today, from this point, from this state forward up into that which is to come. *I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.* (John 15:5)

From this day forward, maybe write it up on your bathroom mirror, I will build my life with Jesus. I will construct my hope bridge with Jesus. I will honor God from this day forward in everything I do.

I don't want to end without saying, . . . *seek not for riches but for wisdom; and, behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich. Say nothing but repentance unto this generation.* (D & C 6:3b-c; 4b) I know that we get tired of hearing this repetitive theme of repentance. You've probably heard it thousands of times from the pulpit and in classes. I want you to know in an intimate way what this means as it comes from Heaven from our Heavenly Father. When He

calls us to repent, the word 'repent' really means to turn.

In fact, repent is to return, return to Him. In its ultimate intimate saying or meaning it's a call to come home. Come back to me. Does anybody get tired of hearing that from parents or grandparents? Come home. Parents, is there anything more joyful than when your children do come home, when they return? It's an intimate tearful plea by Christ to come back to Him spiritually and temporally.

So our journey to the resurrection is really a journey of grace over justice. Our journey of resurrection is about forgiving, offering forgiveness as well as seeking forgiveness. I am aware it is hard to let go of things when you have been wronged. The justice that we all seek, by the way the word shouldn't be justice it should be righteousness. Why we have lost the usage of this word I do not know.

I do not seek justice in my life, I seek righteousness. I want to say that some of us sometimes hold onto things that we should let go of. We must offer forgiveness as well as seek forgiveness in our humility and meekness.

Finally this journey to the resurrection which is a journey to the transforming grace of Christ is a journey to the kingdom. Is there any call more important for us to answer than the call to build the kingdom, the cause of Zion which is the kingdom? The kingdom is the domicile of the King. This is the home of Jesus. I want to be in the kingdom. This is where He leads us to the kingdom to where He is alive with us.

Sam (Jordison), what is in your humble opinion the fullness of the gospel? Sam answered, 'The Book of Mormon.' What is part of the purpose of the Book of Mormon? Sam answered, 'to let people know there is salvation on heaven and on earth.' Wow! That is an awesome answer. This fullness of the gospel which is part of the legacy of this church is an important thing to understand because we seek this kingdom and we understand that Jesus by His death on the cross and His resurrection has brought salvation but the salvation He's

brought so far is spiritual salvation. I think He would have brought the whole thing but He brings spiritual salvation so that when you and I die we get to be with Him in heaven.

What more can there be? We believe in Jesus. We'll get to be with Him in Heaven. The fullness of the gospel which is the greater part of the story is it's not only salvation spiritually in Heaven, it's salvation temporally, physically on earth together. Heaven and earth become one again. This is the journey to the resurrection. This is the journey that leads us to Christ. This is the journey that leads us to follow virtue and love and compassion. It leads us to Christ who is the epitome of spiritual and physical life together, and He wants His kingdom here with us, you and I.

We cannot wait for this kingdom. It is not about a time. We're not waiting for the time to be right, we're waiting for the condition to be met. So it's not a question of when is the kingdom, it's a question of why not now? Why not us? Tell me why can't we be part of the kingdom here now, in this room, with this people, in our homes, in our lives? This path is not just to a recognition in our minds of what Jesus did a couple of thousand years ago.

This path to the resurrection is like a path to this heart of Jesus where we understand, I can be with Him, with Him and with you in reality. I will cross all my bridges with Jesus. I will build all my bridges with Jesus and I look forward to building the kingdom with you as we continue on this path to the Christ.





GOD IS CALLING US TO GO FORWARD

**High Priest
Sherman Phipps
Lamoni, Iowa
April 27, 2014**

Priest Ed Anderson shared Mark 9:32-35 as a Call to Worship: *Now Jesus sat down and called the twelve, and said unto them. If any man desire to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and sat in the midst of them; and when he had taken the child in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall humble himself like one of these children, and receiveth me, ye shall receive in my name. And whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me only, but him that sent me, even the Father.*

I am going to read a few paragraphs from 1st Nephi as well as a little bit of 2nd Nephi. I am starting with 1st Nephi 3:33. *Therefore remember, O man, for all thy doings thou shalt be brought into judgment. And no unclean thing can dwell with God . . . (35) This next scripture is a little longer. If we understand that no unclean thing can dwell with God then, behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel; they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it; they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world: and their joy shall be full for ever. (2 Nephi 6:42) Then I want to read from 1 Nephi again in chapter 3. And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling-blocks, and harden not their hearts against the Lamb of God, they shall be numbered among the seed*

of thy father. Yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; And they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land for ever; They shall be no more brought down into captivity; And the house of Israel shall no more be confounded. (201-205) Then the angel who was speaking to Nephi went on and said, Thou hast beheld that if the Gentiles repent, it shall be well with them; And thou also hast heard, that whoso repenteth not, must perish; Therefore, wo, be unto the Gentiles, if it so be that they harden their hearts against the Lamb of God; For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a great and a marvelous work among the children of men; A work which shall be everlasting, either on the one hand or on the other; Either to the convincing of them unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds, unto their being brought down into captivity and also unto destruction, both temporally and spiritually, according to the captivity of the devil, of which I have spoken. (210, 212-216) So we have the promises both for good and for evil depending on our choices.

The first thing I want to do today is in reaction to some things I've been reading, even in the Lamoni Chronicle. I just want to stand up here this morning in front of you and tell you that there is a God who is a very personal God. He knows you. He knows what's going on in your lives. You've heard this before. You know it, but I want to say it again. He knows what's down the road for you, what lies ahead, and He really loves you. You can't imagine how much He loves you unless He shows it to you.

In terms of the world and everything that's going on what Sherm Phipps has to say to you might not mean too much but I have to say it anyhow because I

hear a lot of other voices doubting God's love and trying to convince people that there is no God and that God is foolishness but man is foolishness.

When I come before the Lord to account for this life He has given me, I want to be able to say at least once I stood and told the people that He is real. I hope you will know that for yourself. I hope you don't have to depend on me to know that but I have stood in His presence, and I want to bear witness that He is. I didn't see Him like some people have but I've felt His presence and I've felt His love for all of His creation.

I've never felt anything as wonderful in my entire life. When I am done with this life and move on I would like very much to be able to come back into His presence and not be cast off, but I would like very much for you also to have that experience of coming into His presence and finding great joy rather than being rejected because we first rejected Him.

I have a lot of concerns about where things are going. I don't want to get off on that too much but I do want to read a scripture to you this morning that I've read several times recently. I want you to think about it. I know you people here, like myself, profess God and we want to be His people. The Lord makes a lot of promises to His people that I would like to see fulfilled not only in my life but in yours.

Here's the prophet speaking and he says, *Thou shalt save thy people, O Lord; thou shalt keep them; thou shalt preserve them from the wickedness of their generations forever. The wicked walk on every side, and the vilest men are exalted; but in the day of their pride thou shalt visit them. (Psalm 12:7-8) I don't know how you are. I sometimes read those scriptures and have a tendency to feel like, 'Well, but I'm one of God's people so I'll be OK.' But, reading on, *For the Lord**



looked down from heaven upon the children of men, and by his voice said unto his servant, Seek ye among the children of men, to see if there are any that do understand God. And he opened his mouth unto the Lord, and said, Behold, all these who say they are thine. The Lord answered, and said, They are all gone aside, they are together become filthy, thou canst behold none of them that are doing good, no, not one. (Psalm 14:2-3) I don't want that to be said of us. I guess that's why I want to talk about some things that normally I wouldn't talk about because I would be afraid I might offend someone.

I don't want us to come into the Lord's presence saying, 'Here we are, Lord, your people,' and have Him look at us and say, 'No, I don't think so.' I think in my experience, and maybe I'm just talking about myself, that as a people we've not yet escaped from Babylon. In fact, sometimes I wonder if we're even trying to escape. Sometimes I'm concerned that I'm just right there in the midst of Babylon and am pretty comfortable with it all which is not a good thing.

Brother Jim Barber asked us some time ago to take time to read the scriptures at least 15 minutes every day. I wonder have we done that? How seriously do we not only search out His commandments but how seriously then do we obey them?

Maybe this is another flaw of mine, but sometimes I think I spend more time trying to figure out what the commandments are than I do just trying to live by the ones that are clear and simple. I wondered as I prepared for this morning how seriously we take the callings that we have from God. I'm not talking just about priesthood. I think everybody in this room has a calling. Everybody in this room God has sought after and I hope continues to seek after.

I expect that if I were to go around the room and take time to ask you, 'Have you ever felt the bidding and the prompting of the Spirit?' everybody in this room would probably tell me yes. I'm not trying to give anybody a bad time about that. I just want us to think about it and consider what we've done with the gifts that God has given us.

Have we really made every effort to be His people or are we pretty comfortable just sort of being His people on Sunday or whenever it's convenient.

Think for a minute what's really the most important thing to you in your life? I've spent way too many days I think being concerned about things that didn't have anything to do really with the building up of the kingdom of God. I would like to say to you, God has always been most important in my life, but if you were watching me you would probably doubt that. I don't have to tell you what some of my weaknesses are because you know them but what really and truthfully is the thing that we most want?

Last week Brother Joel (Loving) talked about Zion for just a little bit. I wish he was here so I don't misquote him. In reference to Zion he said something to the effect, 'Why not now? Why not us?' Zion is not something that's a long ways off. It's never been something that the Lord set out there and said, 'I'm going to send Zion back to the earth on such and such a day so just relax until you get close.' That's never been true.

He's always said Zion is no closer nor any further away than the spiritual condition of His people. So how close are we and if we're not close why is that? How much control do we each one individually have over that? Obviously we don't have and shouldn't have control over other people and their actions. That's what satan wanted. Then once he had that control and did everything the way he thought it should be done, he wanted to be the one to get the honor and the glory for it. But, what are we doing day to day with our own agency? Are we choosing Zion on a daily basis.

That reminds me of something else that I wanted to be sure and say to you this morning. I told you that I know that there's a God and that He's alive and well. He knows each one of you. He knows your needs and He knows what you can accomplish if you'll submit yourself unto Him.

The other part of that that I wanted to be sure and say which might sound a little harsh to some is anybody who tells you there is not a God does not love

you. I know there are arguments that could be made such as well my grandfather doesn't think there's a God but he really loves me. I'm just going to tell you that my belief is anybody who tells you there's not a God is a liar and a thief because all men know right from wrong. That's what the scriptures tell us. They know. They may not have any experience with it. They may have not bothered to address it even.

Why do I say thief? Because anybody that tells you there is no God wants to steal your soul and destroy it. There are a lot of voices in the world today. Some of the voices are from people that seem to be very, very intelligent and from people who others would say are very, very intelligent. People who think and consider themselves to be very intelligent who would tell you there is no God are not speaking the truth.

There are a couple of people in the scriptures that talk to us about the welfare of the souls of our fellowmen, people who really did care about the souls of their fellowmen. One of those was Lehi. You all know who Lehi was. Do you remember when Lehi called his sons together and blessed each one of them and gave them good counsel? At the end of all of that he said, *I have spoken these few words unto you all, my sons, in the last days of my probation. And I have none other object, save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls.* (2 Nephi 1:126, 128)

I'd like to think that that's why I bothered to come here today. I don't know why you came. Hopefully it wasn't just because somebody made you come. The only reason that I have for being here is because weak as I am, nothing as I am, as much of a failure as I am in terms of responding to the Lord I still have great concerns for the welfare of the souls of all of my brothers and sisters. I hope that you have that concern too. Others in the scriptures who expressed great concern for their brothers and sisters were the sons of Mosiah.

Now they were desirous that salvation should be declared to every creature, for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; Yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure



endless torment, did cause them to quake and tremble. (Mosiah 12:5-6) Have we felt that for our brothers and sisters? Do we have a really, really genuine concern for the souls of those around us no matter how they might appear to us, not just the people we come here and meet with but the people we deal with every day? Could we say with these men that the salvation of the souls of our brothers and sisters is foremost in our minds and our feelings and our lives? How is that reflected in the way we interact with those around us?

I'm back to where I started with the scripture that says, *Therefore remember, O man, for all thy doings thou shalt be brought into judgment.* (1 Nephi 3:33) What are our doings? What are we doing with our lives? What goals are we pursuing and what worth are those goals to the salvation of the souls of our brothers and sisters? Will our 'doings' assist the cause of Zion? I hesitated about saying some of these things this morning because I sound like I'm being a little hard and I don't mean to be that way at all. But I do not want us to just go along living our lives like the rest of the world lives their lives and then come and stand before God to be judged and say, 'Boy I wish I would have considered some of that a little more seriously and taken more time to review what I was doing with my life.'

One day this past week I was leaving one of the courthouses and there was a man probably in his 30s sitting out on the front steps. He was kind of a rough looking character but I guess that depends on how you define rough. He was sitting there on the steps and had his elbows on his knees with his head in his hands. As I walked by him I looked and what he was doing was slumped over looking down at a paper that was lying on the sidewalk in front of him between his feet. I'm speculating a little but probably not too much because I've seen this a lot of times.

Across the top of the paper in large letters it said Iowa Department of Transportation. From what I've seen so often these guys think they are going to go out one evening to have a good time and then everything goes bad. They end up getting pulled over, usually for OWI.

Ultimately they end of sitting there like this young man looking at this notice. Again I'm speculating but I've heard these stories from so many. They end up sitting there looking at this paper that says, 'Your driver's license has been suspended.'

What happens then is it begins to dawn on them that they don't have any way to get to work and their wives are going to kill them, etc., etc. As I walked by this young man and looked at him with his head bowed down with a look of great frustration on his face I thought to myself, 'Will this be me when I come before the Lord to be judged.' I thought I was doing all right. I thought everything was fine. I was eating three meals a day and doing what I wanted most of the time but am I going to arrive in front of the Lord and realize I made some bad decisions. I made some bad choices and now I can't come into the kingdom of God and it's too late to change my 'doings'. When you're sitting there looking at that notice between your feet, it's too late, and so I wondered if that's how it would be for me. I sure don't want it to be that way for any of you. I don't want it to be that way for my brothers and sisters.

I think all of us here have been blessed to have the privilege of the fullness of the gospel set in front of us. We have the Book of Mormon as well as the Bible. We have the Doctrine and Covenants. Most of us have had any number of experiences with the Spirit. The Lord has been very liberal with us and it causes me to think about Moses and the Israelites.

I have a hard time imagining what it was like to have been there in captivity in Egypt and have this guy Moses show up with such power. He turned the rivers into blood and sent locusts, lice, frogs and boils to harass the people of Egypt. This man came with such great power. What God told him to say he said, and what he said was what God did. God gave him this privilege. He told him that Moses should speak the words that the Lord gave him and He would accomplish what Moses said. He parted the waters of the Red Sea for the Israelites and led them out of captivity.

I feel like He's done that for most of us in one way or another also. He's opened the way. He's prepared the way that we can come out of captivity. We can come away from sin and away from those things that would result in great despair in our lives, the despair that I see in the lives of so many. God has prepared a way for us to come out of that.

We sitting here today are especially privileged and yet, again, looking at myself I have to wonder. What happened when the Israelites got out into the wilderness after seeing all of these things and all of this power and continued to see God's power? He fed them manna. He sent them quail. He gave them water out of a rock. He gave them victory over armies and nations that were so much bigger and more powerful than they were. Yet there was a certain number, apparently a pretty good part of the people who sat in their tents and said, 'You know what? I would just really like to go back to Egypt. Captivity was better than this.' I'm being a little facetious here but I don't know if they were saying, 'We can't get cable TV out here?' I don't know what they were mumbling about but sometimes I fear that I am like some of those people.

The Lord has done so much for me and my family but then I look at myself and say, 'What are you doing with that? Are you listening to His voice?'



Sherman Phipps



Are you willing to continue to go where He would lead you or have you just set down and said, 'You know what, it's pretty comfortable right here? I think I'll stay here.' Or maybe I'll go back like these people wanted to do, back to what, I don't know. I thought about this the other day. I sure don't want to go back to where my roots came from. I don't want to live in the slums without God. I don't want to go back to where everybody is fighting, drinking and killing each other. I was fortunate enough to be one generation away from most of that.

My parents were very good people but that was right behind them. When I would go to visit my father's parents that's where I went. I don't want to go back to that and yet if I don't pick up and go forward where God is calling me to go what do I do? They always claim you can't just sit. You either go forward or backward. I hope this morning that all of us having been blessed as we have will choose to go forward and not just be comfortable with where we're at.

I wanted to bring a big map of the United States here this morning and pick on someone and ask him if there was some place in the United States where they would really like to go that there had never been before. What I was thinking about was if somebody says they'd like to go to Bangor, Maine, you'd ask them how they were going to get there. Probably most people would

just get on their computers or Ipads and start looking.

If it was me I'd have to get the map out and try to figure out how to get from here to there. What map would we use to get from where we're at to Zion? One of the neat stories in the Book of Mormon is about Lehi and how he was trying to figure out their route in the wilderness. They had the Liahona. Whether it worked depended on their prayers and faith. In addition to these scriptures we have the privilege of knowing that we can go to our Heavenly Father in prayer and ask Him, 'What's the best route?'

Of course another thing you usually have to do if you're going to take a trip is figure out where you are starting from. Some of us know where we're at but some of us are not always sure. The maps are not much good to you unless you know where you are starting from. I guess I would like to encourage us today to take time to go to the Lord in prayer and let Him show us where we're at. Are you brave enough to do that? When I try doing that I usually end up feeling pretty humble and worthless, but I understand He loves me and can do what He wants and so I still have hope because of God sending His son Jesus and sacrificing Him for all of us.

I hope somehow that it will be important to each one of you to figure out where you're at in your standing with Lord and what it would mean to

come back into His presence and to be judged based on what we have allowed ourselves to become. Will that be a really joyful time or will we show up with great regrets?

There's another scripture that I wanted to read to you as you think about these things because I may have sounded a little negative today. It's a promise. Take time to really seek out the Lord and ask Him where you're at and where you need to be and what He wants you to do with your life. Then do that which would include studying the scriptures, prayer, fasting and if you will do that remember this promise and ask yourself, 'Is this something I would like to have in my life?'

This is from Doctrine and Covenants 6:9b. *The Lord says, Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love.* Would you like to know that somebody loves you, somebody that can open His arms around you no matter where you're at, no matter what conditions you're in, no matter how far you may have drifted away? He's always there willing to put His arms around you and draw you back into safety. He wants nothing more than to redeem us and to have our lives be filled with joy both now and in eternity. Please accept that gift.



Help open the windows of heaven

Have you made your financial accounting to the Lord this year yet?

Here is the promise of Malachi for the blessings that will result.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts. Malachi 3:10-12

Would be like these physical and spiritual blessings? I think so.

What would happen if our branch had 50 percent of our members at accounting stewards? What would happen if we had 100 percent accounting stewards?

Won't you help us open the windows of heaven?





Breakfast together



More than 50 people took part in the Resurrection Sunday breakfast at the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch April 20. Almost 80 people filled the church for the worship services that followed. It was good to share together in the celebration in the death and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ.



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
			2 Nephi 1:71-80	2 Nephi 6:10-32	2 Nephi 6:41-56	2 Nephi 7:26-44
Jacob 3:1-21	Jacob 5:19-21	Mosiah 1:97-118	Mosiah 2:8-23	Mosiah 8:4-14	Alma 9:38-55	Alma 9:62-73
Alma 13:13	Alma 13:44-47	Alma 14:1-14	Alma 14:27-38	A Lie, can you discern it? Alma 16:12-19	Alma 16:207-211	Alma 16:212-217
Alma 19:81-87	Alma 19:88-96	Alma 19:97-103	Alma 19:104-112	Moroni 7:25-33	Moroni 7:34-44	Moroni &:45-50
Moroni 7:51-53	Moroni 8:21-28	Moroni 8:12-20	Moroni 8:21-28	Alma 19:74:-79	Alma 17:35-39	

MAY

1 2 3 4 5 6	1
7 8 9 10 11 12 13	2 3 4 5 6 7 8
14 15 16 17 18 19 20	9 10 11 12 13 14 15
21 22 23 24 25 26 27	16 17 18 19 20 21 22
28 29 30	23 24 25 26 27 28 29
	30

APRIL 2014

JUNE 2014

THOUGHTS FROM THE DESK OF BOB GIERTZ

The Gift that came from the Son of God – A case study from the Book of Mormon’s cherished verses of scriptures which came forth from the dust to teach men who Christ really was. Take time to read and understand why we are here and what we are to do with these words of Life.



MAY 2014

Sunday Schedule

Date	MAY 4	MAY 11	MAY 18	MAY 25	JUNE 1	JUNE 8
Speaking	Ed Anderson	Rob Rolfe	Steve Smith	Jim Barber	Steve Cunningham	NAUVOO RETREAT
Presiding	Rob Rolfe	Michael Jordison	Ben Anderson	Rodney Bastow	Rob Rolfe	
Pianist	Cheryl Phipps	Cheryl Phipps	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	Pat Bolingbroke	
Special Music	Diane Anderson	Steve Smith	Rob Rolfe	Alan Smith	Lynda Rolfe	
Family Devotions	Alan Smiths	Ron Smiths	Jim Barbers	Ed Andersons	Sherman Phippses	
Greeters	Sue Beck	George Knottses	Sherman Phippses	Steve Smiths	Bob Rowlands	
Custodians	Jim Barbers	Rod Bastows	Michael Jordisons	Rob Rolfes	Sherman Phippses	
Sunday Evening	Ron Smiths	Steve Smiths	Rob Rolfes	Bob Rowlands	Ron Smiths	

Wednesday Night Prayer Service Schedule

Date	MAY 7	MAY 14	MAY 21	MAY 28	JUNE 4	
Location	Bob Rowlands	Gordon Winklers	Steve Smiths	Rob Rolfes	Ron Smiths	
Presiding	Rob Rolfe	Ron Smith	Ed Anderson	George Knotts	Alan Smith	

SPECIAL EVENTS

Sunday, May 4 - - Priesthood Meeting at 8:30 a.m., Communion Service and Potluck

Sunday, May 17 -- Graduation and graduation parties for Gable Galusha and Teegan Rowland.

Sunday, May 18 -- Potluck recognition for Gable Galusha and Teegan Rowland

Friday, May 23 - Monday, May 26 -- Heartland District Retreat and opening of Cornerstone of Zion Visitor's Center. Please notify Jerry Vickery (573-491-3743) or Bruce Vickery (630-531-6563), if you plan to attend.

Friday - Sunday, June 6-8 -- Branch Archeological Dig Retreat at Nauvoo, IL. No services in Mount Ayr

Happy Birthday: Bob Rowland (2), Zachary Akers (24) and any others we missed

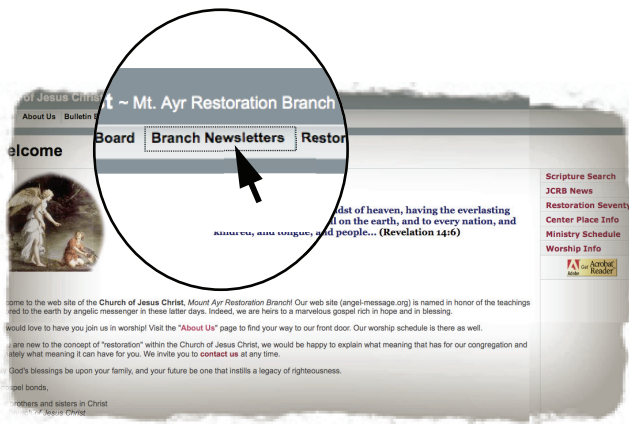
Happy Anniversary: Ron and Di Smith (28), Jim and Linda Barber (30)



Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps
15581 270th St
Lamoni, IA 50140

Have you misplaced your MARB Newsletter?
Want to read it online or search past issues?
Visit the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch website at:
www.gospelrestored.org



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)

MORE NEWS AND NOTES

take part in this Sunday service.

Heartland District activity

On the Memorial Day Weekend, there will be a retreat in Nauvoo, IL, along with the opening of the Cornerstone of Zion visitor's center in Nauvoo.

Volunteers who can spend a weekend or a week in Nauvoo acting as hosts at the center are being sought.

Housing is provided in a church-owned trailer near the site.

Contact David Drummond at dd-drummond@yahoo.com to volunteer. Speakers in some of the Heartland District groups are also welcome. next two years.

Easter Activities

We had a busy group of activities leading up to Easter.

On Sunday, April 23, we had an Easter breakfast at 9 a.m. before the morning Easter service.

The week leading up to Easter the Breakfast With the Master series was held at the First Christian Church in Mount Ayr.

Alan Smith shared the ministry of Monday with Pastor Mike Maddy from the Baptist-Presbyterian Church. The series continues through Saturday morning.

On Sunday, April 16, many from the

branch stayed in Mount Ayr for a pot-luck lunch and then helped pack food for people overseas at the Baptist-Presbyterian Church. The branch contributed funds to purchase the food as well as manpower to help package the food.

Cover Photo:

Another one of the many beautiful worship centers that Sue Beck provides for us each Sunday. This was the center for Easter Sunday