

# Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

# NEWSLETTER

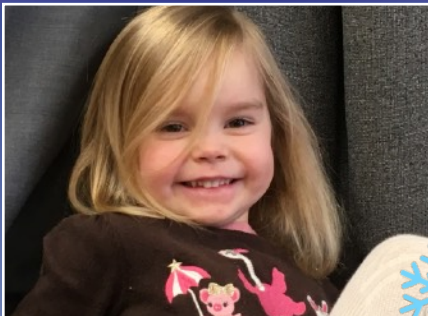
January 2018



2320 State Highway 2, Mount Ayr, IA 50854  
Joel Loving, Pastor Lamoni Iowa

[www.gospelrestored.org](http://www.gospelrestored.org)  
@gospelrestored

*Blessings begin with a hope bridge, constructed in intimate relationship with Christ.*



(From the Youth Mission trip to Tahiti.)

## News & Notes

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MARB youth joined with with Decatur Branch youth for a couple of activities in October & November, with a movie & pizza night at Lamoni Coliseum and then a hayride & hot dog roast at the Mickelson's.

In December the Congregation participated in the Christmas spirit by singing at Joseph's Smith's, Liberty Hall, and the following week by caroling area Saints and friends.

On December 30th Sister Sue Beck and Steve Trullinger were united in marriage in a beautiful ceremony at the church. We wish

them the God's blessings in their new home together.

2017 has seen many of our Saints hit hard having to face illnesses, cancer, heart disease, accidents and lost loved ones to the point that it seems we have been targeted for such tragedies. In spite of it all, we trust in the Lord, though sometimes the road is hard and the path is not always clear. Still we know wherein our salvation lies and we have found hope and comfort not only in this life but look forward to that which is to come. May God (continued on page 16)



# BEING “ALL-IN”

Elder Tony Crandell

Lamoni, Iowa

November 12, 2017

Today, I am going to talk about being “all in” and conclude that with a focus on “packing your coffin.”

In the late 1800’s there was a band of brave souls who became known as one-way missionaries. They bought one-way tickets to the mission field (without the return half). Instead of suitcases, they packed their few earthly belongings into coffins. As they sailed away, they waved goodbye to everyone they loved and all they knew, knowing they’d never return home.

A.W. Milne was one of those missionaries. He set sail for the *New Hebrides* in the South Pacific, aware that the headhunters there had martyred every single missionary before him. Milne didn’t fear for his life because he had already died to himself. “His coffin was packed.” This was their “*All-In*” moment. For 35 years he lived among that tribe. When he died, they buried him in the middle of the village and inscribed this on his tombstone: “When he came there was no light. When he left there was no darkness.”

Somewhere in the not too distant past, we started believing God wants to send us only to safe places to do easy things? That playing it safe is safe. I don’t think Jesus died to keep us safe. I think he died to make us dangerous. Faithfulness is not holding the fort. It’s storming the gates of hell. The will of God is not an insurance plan. It’s a daring plan. And the complete surrender of your life to the cause of Christ isn’t radical. It’s normal. I think it’s time for us to quit living as if the purpose of life “is to arrive safely at death.”

As Paul Harvey would say “Page 2.” More than 100 years ago, a British revivalist issued a holy dare that would change a life, a city, and a generation. What he said was “The world has yet to see what God will do *with*, and *for*, and *through* and *in* and *by* the man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him.” The original hearer of that call to consecration was D.L. Moody. When those words hit his eardrums, they shot straight into his soul. That call to consecration defined his life. It was Moody’s *all-in* moment.

Wiki says Moody left an indelible imprint on his generation. In 1893, his sermons were literally front-page news. Every message was transcribed on the front page of the *New York Times*. More than a century later, his passion for the gospel continues to indirectly influence millions. Moody left an incredible legacy, but it all started with a call to consecration.

I think I’ve told you that in 1960 to 1963, I worked at a Moody radio station - KFGQ and KFGQ FM. KFGQ was one of the first three radio stations licensed west of the Mississippi river in 1923. WOC and WHO were the other two. KFGQ was the national standard in early Christian broadcasting until an interloper wormed his way into the organization, took control, and then bankrupted the station trying to make it a quasi-commercial venture rather than the Christian broadcast station it was from 1923-2005. In the years I was there, I really learned to appreciate the Moody organization and the vision of DL Moody. Suffice it to say the KFGQ is no more, but Sandra and I did get to attend the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1998.

Like AW Milne and DL Moody, we are but one decision away from a totally different life. Making that decision might be the toughest decision we ever make, but if we have the courage to completely surrender ourselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ, there’s no telling what God will do *with* us, *for* us, and *because* of us.

When God is about to do something amazing in our lives, He calls us to consecrate ourselves to Him. That pattern was set right before the Israelites conquered the Promised Land, when Joshua told the people in Joshua 3:5 *And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify (consecrate) yourselves; for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.*” (IV says sanctify.)

Sometimes, I think I understand our problem: *We try to do God’s job for Him.* We all want to do amazing things for God. That seems like the noble thing to do, but we’ve got it backward. God wants to do amazing things for and in us! That’s His job, not ours. Our job is consecration/sanctification. And if we do our job, He’ll certainly do His.

Before I tell you a little more about what consecration/sanctification is, let me tell you what it isn’t: It’s not going to church once a week. It’s not daily devotions. It’s not trying to keep the Ten Commandments. It’s not sharing your faith/testimony. It’s not just giving God our tithes. It’s not volunteering for a ministry. It’s not leading a small group. It’s not going on a mission trip.

Now don’t get me wrong, all of those are good things, but they aren’t consecration. Consecration is more than just changing our behavior. Consecration is more than conformity to a new moral code. Consecration is more than doing good deeds. Consecration is something deeper, something truer.

The word *consecration* means “to be set apart.” By definition it demands full devotion, loyalty, and dedication. It’s dethroning yourself and enthroning Jesus. It’s the complete divestiture of all self-interest and self-will. You might say “It’s giving God veto power over all of your decisions and actions.” It’s surrendering *all* of you to *all of Him*. It’s a simple recognition that every second of time, every penny of your treasure, and every skill and talent you have is a gift *from* God and *for* God.

Consecration is an ever-deepening love and commitment for Jesus. Consecration is a childlike trust in the heavenly Father and blind obedience to the Holy Spirit. Consecration is all that and a thousand things more. But for the sake of simplicity, let me give you my personal definition of it: Consecration is going *all in* and *all out* for the *All in All*.

Before going much further we need to define a parallel phrase that you have heard all your church life which basically means the same thing. You heard me mention it in the story about AW Milne...that phrase is “Dying unto yourself.” There are certain trite phrases that I skim over not really taking the time to dissect them and understand them till I need to use them in a sermon.

## Question: "What does the Bible mean by 'dying to self'?"

Wiki says: “The concept of “dying to self” is found throughout the New Testament. It expresses the true essence of the Christian life, in which we take up our cross and follow Christ. Dying to self is part of being born again; the old self dies and the new self comes to life (John 3:3–7). Not only are Christians born again when we come to salvation, but we also continue dying to self as part of the process of sanctification. As such, dying to self is both a one-time event and a lifelong process.”

Jesus spoke repeatedly to His disciples about taking up their cross and following Him. He made it clear that if any would follow Him, they must deny themselves, which means giving up their lives—spiritually, symbolically, and even physically, if necessary. This



was a prerequisite for being a follower of Christ, who proclaimed that trying to save our earthly lives would result in our losing our lives in the kingdom. But those who would give up their lives for His sake would find eternal life (Matthew 16:24–25; Mark 8:34–35). Jesus even went so far as to say that those who are unwilling to sacrifice their lives for Him *cannot* be His disciples (Luke 14:27). Our rite of baptism expresses the public commitment of the believer to die to the old, sinful way of life (Romans 6:4–8) and be reborn to a new life in Christ. In baptism, the action of being immersed in the water symbolizes dying and being buried with Christ. The action of coming out of the water pictures Christ’s resurrection. Baptism identifies us with Christ in His death and resurrection, portraying symbolically the whole life of the Christian as a dying to self and living for and in Him who died for us (Galatians 2:20).

Paul explains to the Galatians the process of dying to self as one in which he has been “crucified with Christ,” and now Paul the person no longer lives, but Christ lives in him. Paul’s old life, with its propensity to sin and to follow the ways of the world, is dead, and the new Paul is the dwelling place of Christ who lives *in* and *through* him. This does not mean that when we “die to self” we become inactive or insensible, nor do we feel ourselves to be dead. Rather, dying to self means that the things of the old life are put to death, most especially the sinful ways and lifestyles we once engaged in. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:24). Where we once pursued selfish pleasures, we now pursue, with equal passion, that which pleases God.

Dying to self is never portrayed in Scripture as something optional in the Christian life. It is the reality of the new birth. No one can come to Christ unless he is willing to see his old life crucified with Christ and begin to live anew in obedience to Him. Jesus describes lukewarm followers who try to live partly in the old life and partly in the new as those whom He will spit out (Revelation 3:15–16). That lukewarm condition characterized the church of Laodicea as well as many churches today. Being “lukewarm” is a symptom of unwillingness to die to self and live for Christ. Death to self... is not an option for us; it is a choice that leads to eternal life.

It is going to be somewhat of a true confession time this morning. As I look back over my life, I see that I have never truly been “all in” for anything. I have always had the skill to see the big picture and decide how much I really had to do, or commit to, to *just get by*. I was always the 51% guy, just enough to get over the line, just enough to get by. I always left myself open for options



just in case I wanted to go back over the line. In school, I got by- I bet most of you didn’t know I graduated in the top 10% of the bottom 1/4<sup>th</sup> of my class...

At Fort Sill, when I was in Artillery Officer Basic, I had a class in “speed reading.” This was one of greatest classes I ever had. I could read a chapter in a minute and then take a test and at least pass. I would learn enough about the topic to “get by.”

In Church work I find myself skimming (speed reading) the scriptures, not studying them...just memorizing enough to get by. As I get older the photographic memory I once had isn’t working anymore. I think I am out of film.

With the events of last month, we find ourselves in an interesting and exciting position. For our whole lives, we have studied the Book of Mormon. We all have hoped and prayed that we might be alive when the lost plates were again found and the sealed portion translated. How exciting it is to know something in advance of the world! Now, that day is almost upon us; the very thing that we have hoped, prayed, and dreamed about is almost upon us. But are we ALL-IN? Or are we going forward by sitting on the sidelines, watching but not in the game.

You heard the challenge from Joseph Fielding Smith “We are to start now to take the news to the world and witness of its truth”.

Are you ready to pack your coffin? If so, what are you putting in your coffin? Let me quote Joseph Fielding Smith “What lies before us? We must become holy. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind and soul and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the celestial law of God. We like to keep one foot in the Kingdom of God and put the other one over there in Babylon. I tell you this, the stretch between the two is going to be too much for you to reach pretty soon. You’re going to have to move one foot or the other and the choice of what foot you will move is up to you. There is a great work coming and it’s on the horizon and I have witnessed the beginning of it.”

After dying to ourselves we next must now pack our coffins, from this point forward we can never return to the lackadaisical Restoration lifestyle we are currently enjoying. We must now totally commit our time, our talents, and our treasure to our new venture, “that being the mission of preparing for the New Jerusalem and the ultimate return of Christ to the temple in the Center place.”

There can no longer be any looking back at issues and traditions that have plagued us since 1844. All of these issues are now moot with the new instructions and revelations we will be receiving in the near future.

I can hardly wait! I want to be part of the process, I want to be part of the work. I want so to be chosen and accepted for whatever I might do or add to the hastening process. Since I don’t know for sure where the Lord will send me yet, or what He will have me do, the only tangible thing I have to put in my coffin today is my treasure, my tithes and offerings. The intangible things will be my time and my talents. I so want to still be alive when all of these events start to unfold, but if that is not to be, I want my epitaph to also read that “when he left we used the things he had packed in his coffin to erase even more darkness.”

If you, too, must go before all of this comes to pass, what will they find packed in your coffin?





# CLIMATE CHANGE: GLOBAL WARMING OR GLOBAL WARNING

**High Priest Robert Rolfe**

*Lamoni, Iowa*

**November 19, 2018**

**E**lder Tony Crandell read Matthew 6:27, 35-38 as a Call to Worship. *And your heavenly Father will provide for you, whatsoever things ye need for food, what ye shall eat; and for raiment, what ye shall wear or put on. Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Why is it that ye murmur among yourselves, saying, We cannot obey thy word because ye have not all these things, and seek to excuse yourselves, saying that, After all these things do the Gentiles seek. Behold, I say unto you, that your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

For a scripture reading High Priest Rob Rolfe read Malachi 4:1. *For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*

Does anyone here this morning believe in climate change? I do. That's why I faithfully look at the weather reports every day. If the climate didn't change, why would we need to look at weather reports? We look, but many times we don't believe what it says. Mark Twain said "everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it."

Here is one definition of climate change: It is what those who think what is happening, that don't believe in Jesus Christ. Those who know me may be surprised when I tell you I believe in man-made climate change that can cause big, big problems for those of us that call earth our home. What is more important, I believe I can prove climate change is real, with the help of the scriptures. It has happened many times before, is happening today, and will continue to happen in the future. The big difference between me and the politically correct crowd is I don't believe man-made climate change has anything to do with our production of carbon dioxide.

Have ever looked at a topographical map of the Middle East? If you do, you will notice almost all of it is a pale, brown desert-like color. There is only one tiny bright green spot to be found. And that is Israel. Even Israel today is about half desert, but it wasn't always like that.

Let me remind you when Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt, He didn't say, let's go to a land flowing with sand and thirst and hunger. No, Moses said *I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.* (Exodus 3:17) Does this sound like a desert? *For the Lord thy God bringeth thee*

*into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it.* (Deuteronomy 8:7-8) Does this sound like a desert?

And we all know that today part of the desert is blooming in Israel, which means the condition of the Promised Land was once much worse than it is today. In fact, 150 years ago, it was much worse.

What happened? What happened to change the very climate of Israel? There has been catastrophic climate change in Israel – radical climate change – since the Bible days. Let's see the evidence.

Ezekiel 20:45-47 says, *Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field; And say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree; the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein.* If you are not familiar with the geography in the middle east, you would have to ask, THE FOREST of the Negev??? The Negev is in the southern part of Israel and has been a desert for at least 2000 years. Guess what? The Negev is beginning to bloom again since the Israelites came back to the land. And actual forests are being replanted and flourishing. Isaiah prophesied about this in Isaiah 35:1-2. *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.* Orson Hyde left April 15, 1840 to bless the land of Israel. Shortly after he prayed on the Mount in Jerusalem, it started to rain. The question is: why did the Holy Land become a wasteland during the 1,800-year dispersion of the Jews that lasted until they returned in significant numbers beginning in the early 20th century? Why didn't any other people settle this land and turn it into something.

1 Kings 9:6-8 explains it all. *But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and to this house? It wasn't just the children of Israel who suffered as a result of their disobedience and apostasy. So, did the land itself.*

At least one theologian sees this as a miraculous fulfillment of prophecy found in the book of Deuteronomy – especially chapter 28:23-24: *And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.*

The climate in Israel dramatically changed during this 1,800-period – way before Al Gore discovered "global warming."

If you read what Israel's climate and natural landscape was like from the time Joshua crossed the Jordan right up until just before the time of Jesus, it sounds like a heavily forested land. There were amazing crops raised by the people who inhabited the land when the Jews arrived. After the destruction of the temple and the



destruction of the Jews, for 1,800 years it hardly ever rained in Israel. Beginning in A.D. 70 and lasting until the last half of the 1800's – almost no rain. When the Jews started to return, guess what? – increasing rainfall almost every single year beginning at the time of the Zionist movement – with the heaviest rainfall coming in and around 1948 and 1967. Was this just a coincidence? I'll be quite honest with you: I don't think so. Rabbi Jonathan Cahn turned this story into a great teaching called, The Mystery of the Rains. Think about it. There was almost no rain from about A.D. 70 until the late 1800s, then increasing amounts of rainfall with surges in 1947, 1948, 1967 and 1968. But this was all prophesied in the Bible.

**C**atastrophic climate change. But was it man-made? Yes, it was. It was caused by man's sin. From the beginning of the Bible, we see evidence of how man's sin can cause catastrophic climate change. Who was first? Adam and Eve caused the first climate change. They went from paradise to thorns and briars. They went from perpetual retirement to having to work for a living. The people in Noah's day caused a "climate change" by their disobedience. You are likely familiar with these climate changes. How about Moses and the Pharaoh? It took 10 times for Pharaoh to listen and obey. Here are a few examples in response to Pharaoh failing to release the Israelites: *"And the Lord spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water; that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone. And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt."* (Exodus 7:19-21) If all of your water turned to blood, isn't this a change in the climate? It would be a good time to go into the well drilling business.

Here's another example talked about in Exodus 9:17-26. *Therefore speak unto Pharaoh the thing which I command thee, who as yet exalteth himself that he will not let them go. Behold, tomorrow about this time, I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses; And he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field. And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.*

Notice first of all, this kind of thing had never happened

before. Also notice that there was hail (which is cold) combined with fire (which is hot). How did that occur? What kind of weather produces ice and fire falling from the sky at the same time? Would you call that a change in climate? Most importantly, there was no climate change in Goshen. Who lived in Goshen? You know the answer. Israel!

There are many scriptures that talk about darkness coming on the earth. You probably remember the darkness discussed in the Book of Mormon in 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi. Can you feel darkness? Exodus 10:21-22 says you can. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand, toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.* Is this climate change? Yes it is, and it has happened more than once when the people were evil.

Do you believe in climate change caused by man? If we don't listen to God, we may find our climate changing today. Remember the God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. Ladies, say thank you that our God, when you speak to him, Never Says HUH! (unlike your husbands)

In regard to America, Ether 1:31 says this land is a land of promise. *Whatsoever nation shall possess shall serve the God of this land or be swept off.* Just like all the prior inhabitants had been swept off. Does this mean us? Yes, most emphatically! Jesus himself promises that if the Gentiles on this land do not repent, He will:

- destroy our electricity
  - stop our automobiles, trucks, buses and trains
  - destroy our cities (3 Nephi 9:101-106)
- The text says He will "execute vengeance and fury upon them...even as they have not heard."

WHY would a God of LOVE and MERCY treat us this way??? Because He is also a God of LAW and JUSTICE. Because we have made truth into a lie.

Today in America:

- If you oppose a woman's right to kill her unborn child, you are unfit for judicial office.
- Tolerance of *all* things is the highest moral virtue
- Evangelism is *hate* speech 26 states (some a felony)
- One nation, under God, is unconstitutional
- Heterosexual promiscuity is normal
- Homosexuality is normal, even admirable
- Virgins are oddballs

Isaiah 5:20 says, *Woe to them that call evil, good, and good, evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.* Are we ripe for destruction? Do you believe our country will survive, (CAN SURVIVE?) with this kind of moral backbone? And there is so much more that has happened and is happening today.

Don't give up!! Remember before a flower becomes a flower, it has to push through a lot of dirt!!!

Let's Turn to Book of Mormon for a moment. *And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the Gentiles; that they did prosper, and obtain the land for their inheritance; and I beheld that they were white, and exceeding fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord, and the power of the Lord was with them; And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them; And I beheld that the power of God was with them; and also*



that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle. And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land”... (1 Nephi 3:151-156)

It says the power of God was with them. (2 TIMES) Was it? It says they were delivered by the power of God. Were they? What evidence do we have of the truth of this scripture? Is there historical evidence that God was with them? Over and over, during the many battles of the Revolutionary War, there were sudden changes in weather that saved the soldiers fighting for our nation. I don't have time this morning to go into the details, but the facts are in our history. Let me read a couple. These are excerpts from a book entitled "The bulletproof George Washington" by David Barton.

**D**uring the French and Indian Wars, General Braddock, from England, suffered a horrible defeat, losing most of his army. But there is little doubt that God intervened in Washington's behalf during this battle, fulfilling, at least in part, fulfilling the prophesy by Nephi.

One famous Indian warrior who was a leader in the attack was often heard to testify, "Washington was never born to be killed by a bullet! I had seventeen fair fires at him with my rifle, and after all could not bring him to the ground." Most of these marksmen, contrary to the movies, rarely missed their target.

Another testimony came from Mary Draper Ingels. She had been kidnapped from her home in Draper Meadows, VA by a band of Shawnee Indians. Her biography, recounts that during her captivity at the Indian camp, the French held a council with the Indians. The Frenchman were very excited, and Mary listened to their conversation which focused on George Washington. She had met George Washington so she asked the French about him. They related the account of an Indian named Red Hawk who told of shooting eleven different times at Washington without killing him. At that point, as his gun had never missed his mark before, he ceased firing at him, being convinced that the Great Spirit protected Washington.

Fifteen years after the battle, Washington and a Dr. Cralik were traveling through the Western territories exploring. While near the junction of the Great Kanawha and Ohio Rivers, on the border of what is now Ohio and West Virginia, a company of Indians, led by an old, respected chief, approached him. A council fire was kindled and the chief addressed Washington through an interpreter. Through the interpreter, he said: "I am a chief and ruler over my tribes. My influence extends to the waters of the great lakes and to the far blue mountains. I have traveled a long a weary path that I might see the young warrior of the great battle. It was on the day when the white man's blood mixed with the streams of our forest, that I first beheld this chief (Washington). I called to my young men and said, mark yon tall and daring warrior? He is not of the red-coat-tribe--he hath an Indian's wisdom, and his warriors fight as we do--himself is alone exposed. Quick! Let your aim be certain, and he dies. Our rifles were leveled, rifles which, but for you, knew not how to miss--twas all in vain; a power mightier far than we shielded you. Seeing you were under the special guardianship of the Great Spirit, we immediately ceased to fire at you. I am old and soon shall be gathered to the great council fire of my fathers in the land of shades; but ere I go, there is something bids me speak in the voice of prophesy. Listen! The Great Spirit protects that man (pointing at Washington), and guides his destinies---he will become chief of nations, and a people yet unborn will hail him as the founder of a mighty empire. I am come to pay homage to the man who is the



particular favorite of Heaven and can never die in battle.”

AGAIN! What happens to climate change if we obey God's commandments?

Leviticus 26:3-5 says, *if ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.*




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Thank you God for giving me hope,  
 Especially at times when I act like a dope.  
 You're changing my heart; thoughts hidden within,  
 By cleansing my soul and forgiving my sin.  
 You are so faithful, You erase all my fear,  
 You bind up my wounds, You dry up my tears  
 Surely goodness and mercy are blessing my life,  
 You've transformed my home, my kids and wife.





# BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING AND THE HOPE BRIDGE

High Priest Joel Loving

Lamoni, Iowa

November 26, 2017

I would like to read from 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 12:36-37. *For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little: And blessed are those that hearken unto My precepts and lend an ear unto My counsel for they shall learn wisdom.*

The song we just heard was talking about blessings and thanking the Lord for the blessings that have come upon us. I want to talk about blessings too. Blessings are for who? All of us and who are they from? From the Lord and from all of us. I want to talk to you a little bit about what I have talked about before. Some of you have heard this but I would like all of you to be aware of something in my life that as a minister I've become aware of called: The Hope Bridge. Everyone has a hope bridge. There are things you are looking forward to, things in the future, things that you are moving toward that you want to have happen. That is your hope bridge. Everyone has a hope bridge but there are times in life when that hope bridge collapses. Something occurs and the things that we are looking forward to don't happen, maybe can't happen and we get into a little bit of a free-fall.

This hope bridge dilemma is sort of like when we need the Lord the most and we feel like He has not blessed us. This is indicative of the poem "The Footprints in the Sand." What is this about? It's about a person who is walking along and sees the two sets of footprints and then the difficulties in life occur and then there is only one set of footprints. Of course, he is disappointed that the Lord has left him during this time. The Lord reveals to him that that was when He was carrying him, he wasn't alone at all.

There is a difficulty for me with that poem. It's a wonderful poem but the difficulty is that when the person is the closest to the Lord, really held by the Lord, they don't sense it. They think the Lord is away from them. That's a problem. It's sort of like where did the Lord go when all of these difficulties arose? We should sense Him and His closeness. I recall several years ago Deni and I and Bryan, Kacey my daughter's husband, were at a soccer game in Baldwin, KS against Baker University. Kacey was by herself up at a somewhat primitive camp where the bathrooms weren't necessarily the best.

She was a few weeks or months pregnant and something began happening and she had to excuse herself from the others at the camp. She went in to the bathroom in this kind of a crude building

and basically lost the child. She called Bryan but we were several hundred miles away. She was alone. It was cold. She was in this dark bathroom stall losing a child. What do you say over the phone? Having been through several circumstances in people's lives when they feel like the hope bridge collapses, there is, and this takes a lot of experience and faith, but there is the Lord's caring spirit which seeks to come into these moments but we don't see it. I know it's hard but I want you to know that the hope bridge can be built again. The hope bridge should be built in every one of our lives every day.

I remember holding Kacey in my arms soon after when we were able to see each other. She was weeping and sobbing and basically said, 'I don't know if I can ever have a child. Look what happened. I can't bear to face something like that again.' So what do you say? What do you think I said? I prayed that the Lord in that moment would bless her. You might say, "Big deal, we can all do that." My point is that I told her that what had happened was in the Lord's hands and that this future would be built, this future bridge would be built with Jesus Christ. She would have children. She said, 'Dad, I don't think so.' I said, 'Kacey, you're not listening. The Lord will bless you. The blessings are already on the way.'

I have this picture of Bryan and Kacey taken not long after that experience. They have their backs to us so it was just kind of a silhouette over a sunset in Tiona, Little Zion, in Australia. It was a great picture of a sunset over some mountains and a lake. I got inspired and wrote a poem and I talked to her about what was ahead and what was over that horizon that they couldn't see, but it was children in their future. I don't know what it meant to her but I can tell you this, she's had four children now, four. That wasn't easy but the Lord is always anxious to bless us and even when we don't feel like He's close or has blessed us, we don't know what has occurred with the Lord in terms of how He unfolds the future for us.

I want to talk about the fundamentals of blessing. Fundament #1 is: **BLESSINGS BEGIN WITH A HOPE BRIDGE CONSTRUCTED IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST.** There is this friendship that He longs for with each of us. There is this oneness with us that He longs for. Even more important than your marriage or your children is this relationship with Jesus Christ. He knows what we go through. In Matthew 5:5-7 it says, *Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit, who come unto me; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And again, blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.* (See how the bridge is being reconstructed here if we understand these words.) *And blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.*

Christ does this for us. As we get to know Him and read the scriptures it's sort of like He has this perception about life and about humanity and about our history and about what's going on that is different than we get from the secular world, the culture that we normally surround ourselves with. He acts differently. He thinks differently. He talks differently. The things that we don't think are blessings, He says are blessings. Here he is telling them *blessed are the poor in spirit.* Does that make sense? *Blessed are they that mourn.* Does that make sense? *Blessed are the meek.* Does that make sense? Yet Christ as He gives us this insight into the kingdom is telling us about how we can build bridges with the Lord that are



is telling us about how we can build bridges with the Lord that are unbreakable.

There's a book by Paul Wachtal called The Poverty of Affluence. This is a great book. What do you think the poverty of affluence means? It talks about how vacant our lives can be in a spiritual way when they are so full of so much stuff. There was a young couple in North Carolina who were newly married. One of them won the lottery. They won gotten tens of millions of dollars through this lottery. They bought an island off the coast of Florida, bought the whole island and lived there. It was a dream come true. Right? Everything you wanted: pools, spas, a great mansion, your own island, a boat, the ocean. They had arrived. Right? Talk about an affluent life, but within a year they were getting a divorce and one of them had tried to commit suicide. The blessings of God do not necessarily come to you in the way that the world speaks to you or the way the culture would have you understand it.

I am going to read from Matthew 7:36-37. *And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings with his disciples, the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority from God, and not as having authority from the Scribes.* So Fundamental No. 1 is: **BLESSINGS BEGIN WITH THE HOPE BRIDGE, CONSTRUCTED IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.** This hope bridge is also the marriage of the bridegroom, Christ, to the Church in holy covenant.



Young people, do you want to impress everyone with your knowledge of the scriptures, of the Bible? Would you like to know what all of the scriptures are about? I'll sum it up for you in one sentence. The scriptures are about the desire of God or Jesus to marry the church. It's about an invitation to a wedding. That's what it's all about, a covenant and this oneness. I want to say right here as silly and goofy as this may sound to you, I have fallen in love with this congregation in a profound way and want to be part of your lives forever now.

I grab this church directory every once in a while and sit down and look at it and see your pictures. I know not everybody is in this directory but I begin to pray for you. Then I turn a page and I pray and I turn a page and I pray. Do you know what happens? I sense God's anxiousness to bless you. Even if you are not in this directory it doesn't matter, you count and I care and love you. As silly as this sounds, I could live with you forever. Am I crazy or

what? I would be so thrilled to be your next door neighbor. This blessing comes to me not with some kind of a price tag or monetary cost or amount to it. This is something that comes by the free grace of God through you when you share the pure love of Christ with me and others.

Now I want to talk to you about the Fundamental #2 of blessing: **BLESSING AND RESPONSIBILITY GO HAND IN HAND.** Our typical tendency is especially evident with our young people as they grow up. We tend to avoid responsibility and seek blessing. Right? But they are inseparable. Responsibility and blessing go hand in hand. They are completely interlocked. We think that responsibility is all about fault and so we tend to not want fault so we push it on to other people but responsibility is what really enables the blessing to occur.

If there's an accident out on the highway right now and we hear it, are we at fault? Of course not, but should we take responsibility? Of course we should. Fault and responsibility are not the same but being responsible when we go out to help that accident allows us to bring blessing. I want to remind this congregation and I hope I don't embarrass you too much, Joe. It was about a year ago that we planned to have a healing service. We had a couple of chairs up front and people were free to come forward and be administered to for their issues, for whatever they wanted a blessing for. Do you remember? Joe came forward. I do because I was part of that and I felt something quite powerful occurring in the midst of that experience as we prayed for him. Sherm was part of that too. I didn't know exactly what was going on with Sherm or Joe, but I knew something was happening that was divine. A blessing was being bestowed in those moments.

About a month or so later Rob and I went to visit Joe and Anna. Joe talked about that experience as we had prayed for him right here in this church that day. It's not mine to share completely. It's of a private nature and for Joe to share as he sees fit but he had been trying to change something in his life and this change had been empowered by the Holy Spirit. Now what he was doing was not that bad. I don't want you thinking it was something awful. It wasn't. It was a small thing but nevertheless the Lord empowered and blessed him. What's happened to this congregation since then? We've been blessed...by the Lord and Joe's family.

Folks, it's interesting. We seek these blessings and then they come and then what happens next? Then we ask for more blessings which I think is understandable and natural but what I really want to say here is you ask for blessings as you should for God is the only one who can truly bless us appropriately and sufficiently, but when the blessing comes then what? Then we're happy. Then we're better and then we kind of get to go on with our own life. Right? NO!! Listen, are the blessings of God finite or eternal? They are eternal. Josh gets a blessing, it lands on him, he feels better about it, he's enriched by it somehow and then what? Because it is eternal he responds and he passes it on to others and they should pass it on to still others. You are blessed for your sake but also to pass those blessings on to others. There are others who are out there who need the blessings of God that we can assist God in great blessing.





These blessings come with acceptance of responsibility. Folks, I'm asking you. I'm telling you. I am saying this boldly. STEP UP! STEP UP BIG TIME! Don't hear me step on your toes, hear me lift you and love you and care for you and saying, 'You know what? It's time now to step up big in terms of the responsibilities that we're called to do as we pass the blessings on that God has given us. Christ's acceptance of responsibility for our sins brought about the blessings of atonement and eternal life and the transforming grace of Jesus Christ which is absolutely infinite, humongous. He accepted that responsibility and look what has happened. You accept responsibility as well.

**J**ohn 4 tells about the story of the woman at the well. *Wherefore he being alone, the woman of Samaria said unto him, How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? The Jews and the Samaritans of course were kind of like the K.U. Jayhawks and the Kansas State Wildcats. They were enemies. The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. The woman said unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water? Jesus answered and said unto her. But whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman then left her water pot and went her way into the city, and said to the men, Come see a man who told me all things that I have every done. Is not this the Christ? (John 4:11, 13, 15-16, 30-31)*

I am trying to capture in this story the transformation that occurs to this woman. She goes to the well in the middle of the day when absolutely no one else will be there because she is an outcast. She understands her role as an outcast and so she goes there when no one else will be there, but she finds Christ. When Christ has this interchange of conversation with her she realizes that it's the Lord. What happens to her outcast self-esteem nature then? It's lost and she realizes how wonderful this man is who she just met. She goes and she becomes the missionary! This outcast steps up with responsibility and gives the opportunity for those who hear her to also be invited to the blessing. Fundamental #2 is that **BLESSINGS COME WITH ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY.**

Finally, fundamental #3 is **BLESSINGS AND OFFERING,** the too often missing element of prayer and the law of consecration. What is the law of consecration? Basically, it all belongs to God. I think we've done this amazing disservice to ourselves and even to our secular world. There's this word "ownership" which we use frequently and live by which is part of the way we do things in our contracts and in our secular world. But Joseph Smith Jr. early in the 1800s began using a different word. Do you know what that word was? Stewardship. You find that word becoming much more popular in the English language from the early 1830s and forward. Stewardship is a much better word than ownership. What do you own? In the grand scheme of all eternity with the Lord on His throne, what do you own? NOTHING, but we don't act that way and we certainly want to accumulate and own lots of things. I get it. I don't want to completely throw you or all of us under the bus on

this topic, but if I really understand what blessing is, it's about offering all of ourselves and all that we have, everything, to the Lord because we are stewards over what we have blessed to stewards over. For a time, we have responsibility and an affect upon the land and the things that surround us, but it's really stewardship.

I understand that part of our difficulty in American history with the Native Americans in some tribes, and I think particularly of the Lakota, is that when we tried to establish some of the treaties the Lakota had no word for ownership. It was impossible for a person to own property or real estate or land. That belonged strictly to the Great Spirit. No one could own it. This land was here before you were born and it will be here after you die. It's not yours. This created enormous problems that early pioneers had with their treaties with Indians like the Lakota.

There is a book that I have read recently called Bruchko by Bruce Olson. Bruchko is about a man by the name of Bruce Olson whose father was I think a pretty wealthy man and wanted Bruce to follow in his business. At the age of 19 Bruce Olson got dressed, took a backpack of a few possessions, boarded a plane into northern South America and began walking into the forest. He only had literally the clothes on his back and his backpack. That was it. He was told that there was a very primitive tribe that hadn't been influenced by civilization or mankind at any time. He was led by some guides into the deep jungle close to the primitive tribe territory until they stopped abruptly and began running because the guides realized they had gone too far. Bruce was shot in the leg with an arrow and barely escaped with his life.

He somehow got back to a town where he survived and was healed. Then what did he do? He went back to the same place and people where they recognized and befriended him. Eventually he ends up getting accepted by this primitive tribe over considerable time and works with them for decades bringing the gospel to them. What did he start out with? We say nothing because we are thinking in the way we would think of nothing. He started with a hope bridge. He started out with Jesus Christ and that was all he needed. He had an enormous impact upon these people. They converted to Christianity. They have had enormous growth and blessings. They have become a really precious, high-functioning people of integrity and humility. The blessing came because Bruce sacrificed literally everything, almost his life at different points for their blessing. Fundamental #3 is that **BLESSINGS COME WITH OFFERING OURSELVES AND ALL WE HAVE TO CHRIST.**

Now we return to this question. Blessings are for who? Us and who are they from? God and us because they continue to others. As God blesses me, as He blesses you and that blessing is to become a blessing for other people. Christianity is not a call to convenience. Christianity never was a call to convenience. We are not blessings final destination so that we can rest and live leisurely. Divine blessing is infinite in its nature and its purpose. Therefore, we are blessed to become a blessing for others.

Right now I want you to think of someone that needs the blessing of God. I want you to think of someone that you would be willing to invite to church or to become part of the family of love that Jesus is about for all of us. There are people who need the hope bridge that only Christ can provide. It's not about us. It's not about,



‘look what’s happening to us.’ It’s really about understanding that what happened to me when I came here, what happened to Joe when he came here continues to bless all of us and grow perpetually. If we’re thinking appropriately, I think I have a right as the pastor to say this, folks, we’re called to share these blessings. You matter. We care. You count. You have an everlasting soul and I pray for it. Some of you might want to take this church directory or something like this and start turning pages when you have some moments and pray for the people in this directory and their families, like Josh and Brandy when you pray for the Andersons.

I believe the clarion call for this congregation, to this generation today is to wake up to the times. Fire up and become the blessing of the restoration of the house of Israel. It requires a couple of things. Listen to these rare combinations as I name two rare combinations: Wisdom and humility. That’s the first combination that attracted me to this congregation. When we came here I realized there were many wise people and they were humble. I’ve been around lots of wise people who weren’t humble. Here there were humble people and wise people.

There is a second combination though: those who are blessed and yet still hunger for righteousness. Do you hunger for righteousness? Do you hunger for more truth and the light that the Lord is unfolding? *And blessed are all they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.* (Matthew 5:8) I long for that. I’ve felt the Holy Spirit here many times. May this congregation continue to be that blessing from God not only for us but also from us for others yet waiting for the message of the fullness of the gospel is my prayer.



# THE BREAD OF LIFE

**Priest Joseph Mickelson**

**Lamoni, Iowa**

**December 3, 2017**

**A**s a Call to Worship Brother Sherman Phipps read Mosiah 9:39-40. *And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life.*

The scripture I’d like to share with you this morning comes from the 6th chapter of John. After Jesus had fed the five thousand

with just five loaves and two small fishes, the multitude sought him out. His response can be found starting in verse 26: *Jesus...said, Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye desire to keep my sayings, neither because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man hath power to give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which he hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again on the last day....*

*No man can come unto me, except he doeth the will of my Father who hath sent me. And this is the will of him who hath sent me, that ye receive the Son; for the Father beareth record of him; and he who receiveth the testimony, and doeth the will of him who sent me, I will raise up in the resurrection of the just... Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. But I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world...Except ye eat the flesh of*





*the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you... For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*

This morning, we have each had the opportunity to partake of the Lord's communion. We have been given the chance once again, as we do each month, to symbolically eat of the bread of life. Part of my ministry as a Priest is to help you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, prepare for this sacrament. That often means different things to different people at different times in each of our lives. We often think that we ought to prepare through fasting, reconciliation with those we've wronged, studying our scriptures, and attending the gatherings of the church body. Those are all things we each ought to be doing on a regular basis, and they are the fruits of our preparation. However, I fear they fall short of truly preparing us for the communion services each month. Each one of those things is a valuable tool – a stepping stone- an instrument to obtaining the true cause: which is to better understand our Lord Jesus Christ and our relationship with him.

After my experience in administration last January, I underwent a period of transformation. I've already detailed some of the changes that occurred to you all – how I was awakened to the sin in my life – I don't feel the need to dive any further in to that right now. That transformation, though, is something that is everlasting – it is ongoing. Not just for me, but also for each one of us here who has truly had their lives touched by God the Father. I've come to find, however, that it is not a steady climb uphill to greater and greater levels of righteousness and holiness. Instead, it's often a roller coaster. Our awareness of, and response to, the Holy Spirit in our lives ebbs and flows.

For a period of time after my conversion, I felt pretty good about myself, and the changes that had occurred in my life. I knew that God was the driving force behind those changes, but I still couldn't help but feel rather pleased with myself. I could take a mental tally of the temptations and sins that I had cast aside from my daily life, and started wondering why it was so difficult for others to do it, too. It became easy for me to lose myself in scripture, and I couldn't understand why others couldn't do the same. I became engaged in the work of the church, and didn't see why everyone else around me didn't want to do likewise. Like the multitude, I was focused on what I should do, that I should work the works of God. I recognized these thoughts creeping in, and was reminded of the words of F. Henry Edwards when he stated, "The saint's temptation to self-righteousness is just as real as the drunkard's temptation to self-indulgence."

I began to realize that I didn't really understand what it meant to walk humbly before God. I didn't recognize the importance of Christ's response to the questioning multitude when he said, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. He didn't say that the work of God was to create an army of saints that followed to perfection the letter of the law. The work of God is that we might believe on the only one who has ever walked in perfection with the law – Jesus Christ.

As Joel pointed out last week, so many of you are the most humble saints I've ever met. It's one of the things that has drawn me so closely to this congregation. But even though I can see the humility of you all around me, I can't define it or emulate it. So, several weeks ago, I began to pray what was perhaps the most daring prayer I've ever offered. I began asking God, on a daily basis, to teach me to be humble.

It took quite some time for me to realize that God was indeed responding to this prayer of mine. He hasn't stripped me of all my worldly possessions or crippled my body beyond repair to teach me my lesson in humility. Instead, he has opened my eyes to my own weakness. Now, I don't want to overstate or exaggerate this, because I know many of you have faced, and continue to face much greater challenges in your lives than I've ever done.

But what I began to notice was a gradual withdrawal of his Spirit in my life. Or perhaps, what was really happening was that I was entering to an "ebb" in which I was less in tune with the Spirit. That high that I had ridden for so many months since my experience last January – that sensation of excitement, joy, determination, and peace that motivated me to read, and to pray, and to fast, and to attempt to cast out everything that wasn't of God in my life... that began to dissipate. I began to find it harder and harder to motivate myself to do the things that had drawn me closer to Christ the last few months. I began to, once again, be tempted to put God on the backburner and to prioritize other things over my relationship with Him. Old temptations started creeping back in to my mind from time to time, and, whereas they were once easily cast aside, they now took hold upon my thoughts and couldn't be ignored. I began to see how easy it would be for me to slowly slide back in to the "comfortable" way of life I had lived before the Spirit of God had awakened me.

There was a difference, however, between my response to this experience now compared to in times past. In years past, I'd always found ways to justify my behavior – to justify my sin. If a temptation would arise, I would not only act upon it, but I'd do so without a semblance of remorse or shame. This time, my own behavior sickened me. I was broken and in mourning over the thought that I had gone backwards in my walk with God. A number of scriptures kept popping in to my head, revealing to me that I was in danger, and even though I was repentant, I knew that I wasn't repentant enough. I prayed and asked forgiveness, I begged for God's spirit to return in greater power, and I contrived ways that I might "make it up" to God – as if anything I could do on my own could sanctify my own life. I told myself that if I could just fast enough or study enough or pray enough that I could redeem myself of these shortcomings – these stumbling blocks that had set me back on the path to perfection.

Finally, one night, not very many days ago, I began to realize what was happening. I began to understand that God was answering my prayer for humility by making me realize that it is only through Jesus Christ that I have any tiny semblance of righteousness at all. It is only through his atoning blood that I can ever be worthy of forgiveness and eligible to enter into the Kingdom of God. No work that I can ever do will ever qualify me for mercy or redemption, let alone celestial glory. I could live out the rest of my life from this



day until my last without ever breaking another commandment of God and still I would be unfit to be found in His presence – if not for the sacrifice that Christ made on my behalf. The lesson in humility that I needed to learn, and am still far from truly understanding, is that without the Holy Spirit in my life, given by God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, I HAVE NO CLAIM TO ANYTHING BUT ETERNAL DAMNATION. *And this is the will of him who hath sent me, that ye receive the Son. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.*

**R**ecently, I've been turned on to a Southern Baptist preacher by the name of Paul Washer. If you ever get a chance to listen to some of his YouTube sermons, you should take it – the man speaks the truth. It was during this inner-struggle of mine that I came by one of his sermons that spoke directly to my circumstance. In this sermon, Mr. Washer states, "You see in the true Christian not a perfect conformity to the law of God, but someone who recognizes the truth of God's will, the truth of God's character, and has the desire to be conformed to that. And when they are not conformed to that, it breaks their heart. They mourn. They're in contrition."



He goes on to say that, "The true Christian's life is marked by brokenness and confession... We're joyful, and yet we're broken. We're broken over our sin, yet we're joyful in the perfect work of Christ on our behalf. The unbeliever doesn't want to know or keep the commandments of God. When he breaks the commandments of God he's not mourning, he's not broken, he's not repentant, and he doesn't confess. The genuine believer wants to walk in the commandments of God, wants to understand them, and when the genuine believer violates those commandments, they're broken. It is the mark of a believer... God has done so great a work in your life that there is a new sensitivity to sin that is not seen in the unbeliever."

I found reassurance in these words. Instead of viewing myself simply as having failed to do what I knew was right, I began to understand that my response to that failure indicated that the Almighty had truly saved me. Again, going back to the 6th chapter of John, Christ said *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

**B**rothers and sisters, we have been given to Christ by the Father. You and I can be assured of that fact by what the sin in our lives does to our very soul. If those sins eat you up inside – if they make you want to flee and bury your head in shame – if they bring you to your knees with tear stained eyes – then you can be assured

that you have the spirit of God in you, that you are His, and that he will lose nothing that has been given to him. You can be assured that you have eaten of the bread which gives eternal life. Having a new relationship with God means that you inherently develop a new relationship with sin as well.

Each one of us here has been blessed by the fact that we can be numbered among the fold of the good shepherd. But, again as Joel said last Sunday, when we receive that blessing we must still hunger for righteousness. We must respond to it in some way. Just because we are redeemed of our sin does not justify us to act in any which way we choose. It does not mean that you never sin. The first epistle of John tells us that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. These things I write unto you, that ye sin not. But

if any man sin and repent, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Brother A. Oakman once spoke to this truth by saying that, "We are free because the origin of our actions is ourselves. But we are bound hand and foot because from ourselves there is no deliverance." Our only deliverance comes from our advocate on Calvary.

In the 22nd chapter of Luke, during the scene of the Last Supper, Jesus tells the disciples in that room, *With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer... and he took the cup and gave thanks and said, Take this and divide among yourselves... and he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.*

You'll notice that it was not the righteousness of the apostles that qualified them to partake of the bread and wine with Christ. It was nothing of their own doing that somehow forced Christ's hand into ensuring they had a seat at the table. Jesus told them, including the traitor Judas, that they were there and were able to commune with their Lord because he desired it to be so. The same is true of us today. We do not partake of the communion because we have prepared our lives in a way that makes us holy enough to be worthy of the honor. We do it because Christ desires that we remember Him. He desires that we meet together with one another and respond in reverence and in humility to the ongoing sacrifice that he offers for no other reason than the immeasurable love that he has for us. So when we leave here today, we must ask ourselves how we ought to respond to that love.

Our response to the love of Christ – our response to the faith we have in him, which is our salvation – is shown forth by the way we live our lives. Not in little snapshots of weakness, but when we look at our lives as a whole – when we look at the big picture of



who we are and how we live – there should be no doubt in anyone’s mind that we belong to the Lord. We are saved by the Grace of God and our faith in his Son – yes – but we are also told by our master that if we love him, we are to keep his commandments. We learn in the 8th chapter of Mosiah (speaking of the resurrection) that, *Christ is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death. Even this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.*

Jesus tells us that we are to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. That is our standard. It is a standard that we will never attain, but it is our goal, nonetheless. If we do not set the bar at that level – the level that Christ commands it to be set – then we begin to find other standards by which to measure our lives. We may measure our ways against those of our fellow church members, or the priesthood, or even the apostles. Many set their standard against society – a very dangerous thing to do in today’s world. Whenever we judge our lives in comparison to anything but the perfection commanded by Christ, two things happen. First, we find ways to justify our shortcomings and sin. We say to ourselves, “Well, if the priesthood is doing it, I think I’ll be ok doing it, too.” Our bar is lowered to those around us, rather than the One above us. Second, if we do attain the standards we set in comparison to those around us, we can then glory in ourselves and in our own achievements. We can say, “Look at me, I’ve reached the same level of righteousness as the apostle, now I can be your standard bearer.” Humility leaves the scene.

When the perfection of God is our standard, we are continually humbled by the fact that we will never reach that standard in this life. That creates the reverence and the fear of God that we often lack. As we strive to keep this commandment to be perfect, we will stumble. A LOT. And every time we stumble we can know that we are able to get back up not because we have done any great work, and not because we deserve the opportunity, but because Christ is there to lift us. That being said, our work – our life- should, and must, reflect the faith that we have in his ability to save us. The only appropriate response to the knowledge of the salvation found in Christ is a life that yearns to emulate his – that seeks diligently to keep his commandments, no matter how many times we fail. No matter how hard the struggle, we will continually cling to that rod of iron until we come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree - clinging not by our own strength but by the strength that we are given through the Holy Spirit because of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Last time I spoke, I made mention of the three denials of Christ made by Peter during the time of the crucifixion. The flip side to that coin is found in John 21, after the resurrection. As if in some way cancelling out Peter’s sin of ashamedly denying his Lord, Jesus asks Simon three times if he loves him. You all know the text, *Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, yea, Lord; though knowest I love thee. He saith unto him Feed my lambs. He saith unto him a second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea Lord, thou knowest I love*

*thee. He saith unto him Feed my sheep. He saith unto him a third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved.. and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Those of you who have experience in livestock production understand what I mean when I say that the term to “feed” encompasses a lot more than just the physical act of supplying nourishment. If I am responsible for feeding a set of calves or a group of pigs, that means that not only is it my duty to ensure the receive sustenance each day, but also that I tend to their every need. If that means that I must sacrifice my own time and desires to ensure they are cared for properly, so be it. I would closely look at each animal daily, identifying any that are in special need of treatment or care. When Jim was asked to feed his neighbors cows, he understood that he was then inherently responsible for ensuring that they are vaccinated, treated, and cared for in every other regard, as well as the daily chore of supplying corn and hay to the critters.

In response to the love that Christ showed unto us on the cross, we are to feed his sheep. And although I think it is certainly important and necessary that we take care of the poor and hungry in our world, I don’t believe that is necessarily what Jesus was referring to in this instance. The sheep of Christ are the followers of Christ. In response to his love, we are to love and care for our brothers and sisters in the church. We talk a lot about how we are called to be one and to unify. You all know better than I do how difficult that can be. But it is our calling. If we love him, we will feed his sheep. We will grow as a body in unison, in accordance with God’s will, and in harmony with the doctrine of Jesus Christ found in both the Bible and Book of Mormon – for it is one in the same. Jesus prayed to his Father that it would be so when he said, speaking of his disciples, *And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.*

**I** am reminded of the time that Jesus’ mother and siblings were pushing their way through the crowds, seeking to see him face to face. His disciples told Jesus that they sought him, thinking perhaps he’d pave the way for them to come to the front of the multitude. Instead, his response was *whosoever shall do the will of the Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister, and mother.* Folks, you all have become my brothers and sisters, and my fathers and mothers (and perhaps a few of you have even become my grandfathers and grandmothers, but I won’t go there). The point is I can sincerely say to you all that I love you like family because the love that we share derives from the love of Christ. It warms my heart and rejuvenates my soul when I can sit in a room with you all in fear and reverence of our God and partake with my brothers and sisters in the sacrament of the Lord’s Communion. We must take care of one another, we must bring more in to this fold, and we must unite with those around us who share a common love of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. We must truly become a family and a working body that continually seeks earnestly to do the will of the



Almighty individually and collectively, no matter the cost or the sacrifice. That is where becoming one begins. Before we can think about how we should unify with this group or that group, we must perfect unity within our own group.

The apostolic church, after Jesus' ascension, was endowed because of their unity. In the book of Acts, we read that 3,000 were baptized in a day and that they *continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers... and that all that believed were together and had all things common... and they, continuing DAILY with one accord and breaking bread from house to house did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* Folks, the only thing that is holding us back from that kind of experience here and now is ourselves.

Moroni tells us in chapter 6 that members of the church did not receive any unto baptism, save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins. And none were received unto baptism (or in other words, received unto the church), save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.

The signs of the true Christian were the same in 400 AD as they are now. When the Holy Spirit truly moves in our lives, our hearts become broken as our sins come to light in our own minds. That brokenness yields a determination to serve God until the end and brings us into a state of continual repentance. Moroni goes on to teach us the importance of gathering together often as followers of Christ, and growing in our faith and reliance upon the merits of the master with fellow believers: *And their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and finisher of their faith. And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls: and they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus. And they were strict to observe that there should be no iniquity among them.*

You and I - whether, we meet together in this building and partake of communion, or on Wednesday nights in prayer service, or in our homes with the priesthood - we are to build one another up in our faith and minister to each other's needs, both temporal and spiritual. Sometimes, that means humbling ourselves to admit to one another what our needs truly are. Christ called us to be servants to one another. We have been given this fantastic gift of redemption, which sets us free - a gift that we remember today with the bread and wine. But that gift is just the first step. The next step is to respond to it by lifting one another up to new levels of spirituality. We must first eat the bread of life ourselves by nurturing our personal relationship with God and Christ. We must allow His word and His commandments and His love to penetrate our hearts and our minds - to overcome us and to become the driving force of all our being. The greatest commandment is to *Love the Lord thy God with all they might, mind, and strength. And the next is like unto it, love thy neighbor as thyself.* It starts, first and foremost, with you and God. Then, we are to feed one another

the bread of life by ensuring that each of us keeps Christ centered perfectly in our lives at all times. And when we fail, we are to lift each other up with the hope that comes from the eternal sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

I'd like to close with a passage from the third chapter of Alma. *And now behold, I say unto you my brethren, If ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, Can ye feel so now? Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white, through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins? Behold are ye stripped of pride? I say unto you, if ye are not, ye are not prepared to meet God. Behold, ye must prepare quickly, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand... he sendeth an invitation to all men; for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith, Repent, and I will receive you; yea he saith Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely. Amen.*



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Hallelujah,Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!  
God is blessed, God is holy ,  
God is full of grace and mercy!  
Hallelujah,Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

Oh sing unto the world of His birth!  
Oh sing unto the world of His ministry!  
Oh sing unto the world of His blessings,  
For His light and His Everlasting Life!  
Hallelujah,Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah!

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# Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

c/o Cheryl Phipps  
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Have you misplaced your MARB Newsletter?  
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[www.gospelrestored.org](http://www.gospelrestored.org)

*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)

(continued from page 1)

... continue to bless each one in the coming year. And as we grow in our understandings of the the Gospel we pray that we may continue to grow closer to each other as we lean on each other for support and strength. May we be found giving our lives in service and sacrifice to Christ our King as He moves towards the restoration of the House of Israel and the redemption of Zion. **Onward to Zion!!**



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Dec. 31** New Years Eve Party. 6:00 PM at Ron Smith's
- Jan. 7** Priesthood Meeting. 8:30 AM at MARB
- Jan. 13** Men's Breakfast at Pizza Hut 11:00 AM
- Jan. 23** Women's Meeting. 5:00 PM at Rowland's
- Apr 2-7** JCRB General Conference in Independence