

Church of Jesus Christ

December 2019

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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*Unto you is born
this day in the city
of David, A Savior,
Christ the Lord.*



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News & Notes

MARB held our annual Caroling Party on December 14 with nearly 20 souls braving the cold as we caravanned to several homes around the community. We returned to Ron & Di's to fellowship for the evening.

On December 22nd the congregation held a Christmas pageant at the 10 o'clock hour. Orchestrated by Sandy Crandell, various members took part in acting out the story of Christ's birth from the two Testaments of the Bible and from the Book of Mormon. Only a small part of the

congregation was left to enjoy the service without commitment but all were blessed by the scriptures and pageantry shared.

The congregation will hold a New Years Eve part at Ron and Di Smith's home in Lamoni starting at 7 PM on December 31st. Bring your favorite snacks, games, laughter and competitive bone as we bring in 2020 together.





of itself in love.



THE LORD'S MY SHEPHERD

Priest Rodney Bastow

Mount Ayr, Iowa
October 27, 2019

Elder Michael Jordison shared Ephesians 4:11-16 as a Call to Worship. *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we, in the unity of the faith, all come to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying*

Brother Rod Bastow read the 23rd Psalm as his opening scripture. *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Joe, I really appreciated your message last Sunday. I don't want to scare you or anything but you kind of remind me of me forty years ago. Our backgrounds are very similar. I kept thinking about what you said last Sunday. Many things did not apply to me but other things did. I really appreciated what you said.

I felt like in my preparation a sermon came to me. I pray that it is what God wants me to say to you today and it will bring us closer to Him and to His Holy Spirit.

This summer I was the emcee for our 50th class reunion. For some reason out of 99 kids they selected me to be the speaker. They'll probably never do it again because it started at 7 and didn't get over until 9:30. They called it the Rodney Show. I don't know if this sermon will last quite that long but it will be close. I hope we call this when we get done The Jesus Show. If we can call this The Jesus Show I say we should give God all the praise and the glory.

I need to update you a little bit on what's been going on in my life. Some of you know what I do. Other than farming I am the Middle School football coach. I just finished my fifth season coaching Middle School football. I don't look that crazy do I? This year I worked mainly with the 8th grade. Last year they were 7th graders. Last year they were the reason I almost didn't coach this year. For some reason I came back and did it again. We didn't win a game. We didn't have a game that was even close but still the season was a success I think. The boys listened better this year. They didn't do what I told them to do but they were listening. You could see that they were paying attention to me. I didn't have to yell at any of them. Debbie thinks I am a little grouchy with these kids. You about have to be or you won't survive. I didn't make a one of them cry this year so I felt like that was a success. I didn't have a one of them get kicked out of a football game this year. I felt like that was a success. It's just that these boys just aren't football players. Some of them are nice kids and fairly good-sized but they just don't have that attitude I guess you would say. Maybe they are too nice.



They're just not mean enough. They don't move very well.

I only had 13 of them and that was a problem too. You play 11 at a time so everybody gets to play but as the season went on we had one that became permanently ineligible because of grades. We had a couple get injured. I went through quarterbacks like crazy this year. It's hard to be successful when you are breaking in a new quarterback each game. My biggest, strongest boy played one or two games and then he was ineligible the rest of the season.

Two of my players from last year didn't come out this year. One of them was the quarterback and his stepdad is the head coach at Mount Ayr. If he had come out he would have helped us. The other was a running back, probably our best tackler, and he didn't come out either. I'm not sure why. I don't know if it was me. Maybe like Deb said I'm too grouchy. I don't know if they thought since we didn't have anyone to block for them they were going to get killed every game. That could have been part of it but for some reason they just didn't want to go out for football, and I don't understand that. You are in 8th grade and get a chance to play football. How much better does it get than that? Of course, it was better when I played because we had heavyweights and lightweights so I never had to go against anybody that was over 120 pounds. Of course, they still outweighed me by 30 pounds. These boys apparently didn't enjoy it enough to go out.

Our last game was Tuesday. I am not a very good loser. We were playing Clarinda and they are huge. They are big and they are strong. Our best kids are hitting them and bouncing back off. I knew we were in trouble when they pulled into the parking lot with two buses. Anytime a school brings two buses that means you are really going to be outnumbered. We have 12 boys. They had 26. So I knew that would be a problem too. They were just killing us physically and on the field up and down and I wanted to just kill their quarterback. I told my guys during the next play to hit him. I didn't care what else they did I just wanted them to hit him. Of course, that didn't happen. We didn't hit anybody all night long. This was funny. We got called twice for holding. My boys never touched anybody so how could they hold anybody but maybe somebody did.

Toward the end of the game they were still passing the ball and that didn't make me too happy but they put in their 2nd string. It might have been their 3rd string. I don't know but one of our boys broke lose, ran 80 yards for a touchdown and scored. You would have thought that we had won the super bowl. The boys were so excited. We finally scored this season. The fans just erupted and I was thinking, 'Wow, we're only behind by 40! We can come back.' Then right after that my littlest guy, about Roger's size, intercepted a

pass and we're excited again. That was fantastic that that happened.

After the game the officials complemented us on how well the boys played together. How they were always encouraging each other. They didn't get on each other's case. They stayed positive. I was really glad to hear that but a little bit embarrassed because I was the one that wanted to kill the quarterback. They were staying positive. They were playing hard. They were doing what they wanted to do. I was really glad that we scored the last touchdown because that made the season end on a positive note but I'm not sure whether I will do this again next year.

This year I did something else new that I hadn't done before. I had always wanted to be the announcer for the Mount Ayr high school varsity games. We've been back here now for 13 years. I did it in Rockport. I did it down in Burlington Junction but never got to do it for the varsity in Mount Ayr. I've done JV, Middle School before I was coaching, wrestling but never was asked to do the varsity. I'm not sure now why I wanted to do that but it was fun and I enjoyed it especially because the boys that were out there playing were kids that I had had in Middle School. They were 8th graders when I first started coaching and they've had a good season this year. They went 7 and 2 which is not as good as Lamoni High School this year but it was still a pretty good season. They also made the playoff and that was good. I could tell when those guys were in 8th grade that they were really going to be good. They hit hard. They played hard and just seemed to enjoy the game. They talked about it being Raider Football because they said we expect to play a certain way. I enjoyed watching them this year but as I watched them I kept thinking, 'Well, there are several that don't play football anymore. I remember that kid that was such a good running back when they were in 8th grade. Where did he go and why isn't he playing anymore? He was such a good sport and encouraged the other kids when they were playing but he didn't play once he got into high school. I don't understand that.

There are some others that didn't play. One of them was the heart and soul of the team when they were in 8th grade. He wasn't a real big guy but he was a lineman. He was the one that was always saying, 'OK, let's go guys. Come on we can do this. Let's get in there. Let's hit harder.' I don't know if you've noticed but Mount Ayr puts a lot of emphasis on football. If you go up and look at the stadium, it's a million dollar plus facility. It's really something. Now they want to spend \$600,000 to \$700,000 on lights so it's a big deal here in this community. If you are a football player I would think you would be held in high esteem so I can't understand why



these guys wouldn't play. What has happened to them? He isn't even in school anymore. How could that happen? He was such a good kid? Why would they walk away from that when I know they enjoyed it. I know they were having a good while they were playing football.

A couple of weeks ago Debbie and I went to Tingley, IA to the Methodist Church. That is where Debbie went to church when she was growing up. Then I came along and took her away from all of that. We went up there because they are going to tear down that church so they had one last service to kind of celebrate. That church has been there since 1910. It's a beautiful building. It has stain-glass windows, nice woodwork and pews. It's just a really nice facility and now it is going to be torn down.

I was told that there are usually only 10 people who come. That's not very many but for this service there were 145 who attended. It was great. Tingley used to have 3 churches and now they just have one. What's happened? Where did the people go? This was a really nice service. The minister did a really good job. She gave a really good message that was appropriate for what was going on. There was a special song that was arranged called "Halleluiah." I don't know if you have ever heard that. We used to sing it in Ringgold Singers. It was arranged for this occasion and it was really nice. They had a bunch of young people playing in a bell choir. That was really nice. It was good to see all those kids enjoying that.

It's sad to think that that beautiful church will no longer exist but it is sadder to think that the people who have made it such a special place are no longer there. They are no longer going to church there.

This church up on the hill (Community of Christ Church in Mount Ayr) was built in 1950. I've often wondered what it would be like if we had a reunion of the people that used to go there. Most of you wouldn't know anybody that would return since it's been that long since we've been there. I don't know how many of them would come back. I know a lot of them that are my age don't really go to church much anymore or if they do it's a different type of church. I don't understand that. I don't know what's happened.

I figure we have been in this building about 20 years. Look at all the different people that have come and gone since we started having church here. Not many of us are still here that were here when we first started worshipping here. I don't know what's happened to some of these people. I don't know where they went. I don't know whether they have died off, moved away or what has happened. What has caused that?

I read a devotional every morning. Right now I am

reading from Diane Gould's book. She goes through a different scripture every day. She applies this devotional to her life. I kind of enjoy that. It helps me to know the scriptures a little better. She had one entitled "The Lord is My Shepherd" and she used this scripture from Isaiah 53:6 that says, *All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own.* She continued by saying *how comforting it is to be reminded that the Lord is still our shepherd. He watches over us, protects us from danger, attends to our daily needs and saves us from harm. Even when we stray away from Him, He remains diligent in calling us back to Him. If we become lost He searches for us and rejoices when we are found.*

This fall has been kind of depressing at times. It's nice to have a Sunday when it's not raining. There has been way too much rain. Fall calving was going really well and then I started losing some calves. That kind of brings me down. The football team would kind of bring me down a little bit so there were days when I was really down. Just not being the type of person I should be and when I read this devotional, it dawned on me that even though I wasn't doing probably the things I should be doing, Jesus was still calling for me. I hadn't thought about or considered that Jesus would search for someone like me and that He would rejoice when I would come back to Him. I really like the thought that Jesus is actively seeking us. He's trying to bring us back to His path.

As I prepared for today I searched for "The Lord is My Shepherd." I found some different devotions about this. I found one from "Got Questions. Your Questions Biblically Answered." I took out the part in this devotion having to do with sheep. Have any of you ever raised sheep? Sheep are really dumb. The one thing that sheep know how to do best is die so I didn't really want to include the part about sheep. I thought about putting in cows but I wasn't sure how to phrase that. I guess sometimes we're like sheep.

It is our own nature that there is this tendency to go astray, to follow the lusts of our flesh and eyes and pursue the pride of life. As such, we are like sheep wandering away from the Shepherd through our own futile self-remedies and attempts at self-righteousness. It is our nature to drift away (that's from Hebrews) to reject God and to break His commandments. When we do this, we run the risk of getting lost, even forgetting the way back to God. Furthermore, when we turn away from the Lord, we soon find ourselves confronting one enemy after another who will attack us in numerous ways.

*Jesus declared that He is our Shepherd and demonstrated it by giving His life for us. **The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.** (Matthew 20:28) Through His willing*



sacrifice, the Lord made salvation possible for all who come to Him in faith. In proclaiming that He is the good shepherd, Jesus speaks of “laying down” His life for His sheep.

Like, sheep, we, too, need a shepherd. Men are spiritually blind and lost in their sin. This is why Jesus spoke of the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15). He is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for us. He searches for us when we’re lost, to save us and to show us the way to eternal life. We tend to be like sheep, consumed with worry and fear, following after one another and not following or listening to the Shepherd’s voice. We can be easily led astray by others to our own destruction. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, warns those who do not believe and listen to Him. He said: **I did tell you, but you do not believe . . . you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow men. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.** (John 10:25-28)

Psalm 23 tells us that the shepherd meets the sheep’s every need: food, water, rest, safety, and direction. When we as believers follow our Shepherd, we, too, know that we will have all we need. We will not lack the necessities of life, for He knows exactly what we need. (Luke 12:22-30)

Psalm 23 talks of leading the sheep “beside the quiet [stilled] waters.” The shepherd must lead his sheep because they cannot be driven. (That’s very true. They cannot be driven. In fact, cows are kind of hard to drive but they will come to you if you call them.) Instead, the sheep hear the voice of their shepherd and follow him – just as we listen to our Shepherd, Jesus Christ – in His Word and follow Him. If a sheep does wander off, the shepherd will leave the flock in charge of his helpers and search for the lost animal.

In Psalm 23 the Hebrew word translated “paths” means “well-worn paths or ruts.” In other words, when sheep wander onto a new path, (which invariably will lead to trouble, they start to explore it,) which invariably leads them into trouble. This passage is closely akin to the warning in Hebrews 13:9: Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. The apostle Paul also alludes to this idea in Ephesians 4:14.

Finally, the shepherd cares for the sheep because he loves them and wants to maintain his own good reputation as a faithful shepherd. As we’ve seen in Psalm 23, the analogy of the Lord as the Good Shepherd was also applied by Jesus in John chapter 10. In declaring that He is the shepherd of the sheep, Jesus is confirming that He is God. The Eternal God is our Shepherd and we would not want it any other way.

Usually when I prepare to talk I have a hymn or song that

will come to my mind and I keep playing this song over and over in my mind because it helps me to stay focused. When I think about some problem on the farm I switch to the song so that I don’t dwell on that. When something else goes wrong or I get distracted, I come back to this song. It keeps me thinking about what I want to say and not thinking about something else.

This time I kept hearing the words “there is victory in the Lord above.” I have no clue where that came from. I don’t know how I started thinking about that. I hadn’t recently heard the song. There was no reason for me to start thinking about that. I know that must sound strange but to me it had to have been from the Holy Spirit. I looked up those words “victory in the Lord” and I found this song called “Long Black Train.” Have you heard it? It’s by Josh Turner. I would like to read this song to you.

Long Black Train

There’s a long black train comin’ down the line,
Feeding off the souls that are lost and cryin’.

Rails of sin, only evil remains.

Watch out, brother, for that long black train.

Look to the heaven’s, you can look to the sky.
You can find redemption staring back into your
eyes.

There is protection and there’s peace the same;
Burnin’ your ticket for that long black train.

‘Cause there’s victory in the Lord, I say,
Victory in the Lord.

Cling to the Father and his Holy name,
And don’t go ridin’ on that long black train.

There’s an engineer on that long black train,
Makin’ you wonder if the ride is worth the pain.
He’s just a-waitin’ on your heart to say:
“Let me ride on that long black train.”

But you know there’s victory in the Lord, I say.



Victory in the Lord.

Cling to the Father and his Holy Name,
And don't go ridin' on that long black train.

Well, I can hear the whistle from a mile away.
It sounds so good but I must stay away.
That train is a beauty makin' everybody stare,
But its only destination is the middle of
nowhere.

But you know there's victory in the Lord, I say.
Victory in the Lord.

Cling to the Father and his Holy name,
And don't go ridin' on that long black train.

I said cling to the Father and his Holy name,
And don't go ridin' on that long black train.

Yea, watch out brother for that long black train.
That devil's drivin' that long black train.

Debbie will testify that I've played this on You Tube probably 10-20 times this week and I'll probably play it some more. Satan is driving that long black train. He wants us to ride with him. He wants to give us a life of pain and torment. We see and hear the anger and the hatred that is going on in our world. That's what Satan wants. He doesn't want us to be happy. Jesus has a better way, a way of peace and happiness. There's victory in the Lord. Look to the Father and His Holy word.

I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and they know me. I know them in the same way that my Father knows me. And they know me in the same way that I know the Father. I will die so that I can save my sheep. I have other sheep also, and I must bring them too. They do not belong to this group of sheep. But they also will listen to my voice. So, all the sheep will become one group, and they will have one shepherd. (John 10:13, 15-16)



GREAT AND MARVELOUS ARE HIS WAYS

High Priest Sherman Phipps

Lamoni, Iowa

November 3, 2019

Brother Gordon Winkler used Moroni 7:18 as a Call to Worship. *Wherefore I beseech you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ, that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.*

I want to read a couple of scriptures to you this morning. I am reading from Doctrine & Covenants 16:3c through 4a. *Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; for, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth. Wherefore you are called to cry repentance unto this people. And if it so be that you should labor all your days, in crying repentance unto this people, and bring save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father! And now, if your joy will be great*



with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father; how great will be your joy, if you should bring many souls unto me!

Keep that in the back of your mind somewhere. I wanted to talk about a subject that some of you may be tired of hearing about but I hope to come at it in a little bit different direction this morning. That has to do with the end times. You know there has always been an interest in what's going to happen in the end times. We talk about end times. We talk about the end of the world. We talk about last days but the "last days" as such are never mentioned in the scriptures. That term is not in the scriptures to my knowledge so if somebody does find it be sure and tell me.

There is a lot in the scriptures about the end times. It seems like there's always been an interest in that. The apostles and the disciples were after Christ about what was going to happen in the end times. Revelation also talks a lot about that. There have been movies made about it and books written about it. People preach about it a lot but this morning I'd like to talk about it from a different perspective, I hope. So I'm not really going to talk about what I think about all the awful things that are coming.

When Christ was talking about the end times He was talking about the end of the wicked. *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews; and what is the sign of thy coming; and of the end of the world? (or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world.)* (Matthew 24:4) That can't be all bad! He wasn't necessarily talking about the end of all of us. He did talk about how there would be wars and all that sort of thing. There is a lot of stuff to read in Revelations, and there's a lot of stuff in the Doctrine & Covenants about what is going to happen in the end times. There are some pretty scary things that is talks about. But Christ said when ye see these things, . . . *see that ye be not troubled.* . . . (Matthew 24:25)

There's a scripture that talks about how the prophets of old longed to see our times. Does anybody know where that's at? I almost didn't use this because I couldn't find it when I was preparing but I know it's in there. It talks about how the prophets have all longed to see our time. Well, as Jim said when I mentioned this earlier, do you think that's because the prophets were all a bunch of sadistic guys and said, 'Oh, boy I can't wait to see this awful stuff happen.' No, I think it's because they saw this from a different perspective.

You know there's another scripture that talks about how God doesn't do anything without revealing it first to His prophets. (Amos 3:7) Some just celebrated Halloween. I didn't. I don't like Halloween but I don't need to get off on that. But, if you decided that you needed to run down to Casey's about 10:30 PM on Halloween to fill up with gas or

whatever and there were some people coming in and out of Casey's with weird looking masks on. You wouldn't think too much about it. After all it is Halloween but what if you went down there on May 26th and you saw people coming in and out of Casey's with weird masks and witches' hats on. To me that would be a little weird. It might actually spook me a little. Why am I talking about this? Because the Lord knew these things that were talked about in the scriptures and He didn't want us to be caught off guard and surprised so He told us these things but not so we would worry about them and be scared and think 'Oh, my goodness. We're doomed.' He said, *Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect's sake.* (Matthew 24:24) He as telling those who are/will be His these things so they could understand what was happening, recognize the truth of His words, including the promised blessings, and not be afraid.

I hope that some of what I have to say this morning will actually be encouraging especially to the younger people because sometimes I think if I were younger and I listened to all this stuff I would think, 'Well, what's the use? It's all going to fall apart.' So many of these books, movies and even the sermons that talk about the end times depress me when I listen to them or watch them. I don't think that was the purpose of the Lord in sharing this with us at all. I think He just wanted us to know this stuff is going to come and we just need to be firm in this covenant that we've made here this morning because if you read all the scriptures it always ends up with the assurance that His people are going to be preserved. That doesn't mean that nothing will happen to us. We'll just wander willy-nilly along while everybody else is having a bad time. Obviously it doesn't mean that because you can go to the scriptures and see how the Lord's servants met their deaths in all sorts of ways we probably wouldn't volunteer for. Abinadi was burned at the stake. John the Baptist had his head cut off. They were the Lord's servants so it doesn't mean we will just walk about unscathed but He says in the end, whether it's this life or the next, He will preserve His people and He even says spare them. How many times has He spared us? I don't know what all of your backgrounds are but I hope everybody here has some testimony of God's hand at work in their lives. Something they can look at and say yes I know the Lord's words are good and will be fulfilled.

Did He tell us all these things so that we could be afraid and run around like chicken little screaming about how the sky was going to fall. I don't think so because what do the scriptures say? 1 John 4:18 says what? That perfect love castest out all fear so if we have taken Christ's name upon us and if we do that seriously; if we keep that covenant alive and keep His Spirit alive in our lives through the means and ways that He has prepared for us to do that; if we have that



perfect love within us the scriptures say that we can go through all things without fear. We don't have to fear.

I had another scripture that I wanted to read to you that maybe I should have read earlier just so you could be trying to guess how I was going to work this in. Romans 8:28 says this, *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.* Do we believe that? I do simply because I've watched over all the years how the Lord works things. It doesn't mean I always understand them but I truly believe and trust that all things will work to good for us if we continue to love God and to make His ways our ways, or our ways His ways. However, you want to say that.

So as we look at what's going on in our society and as we read these scriptures and we hear everybody talk about these things, I hope we will be continually reminding ourselves of this scripture. No matter what happens, no matter what society does, no matter what happens in the political world, no matter all the natural disasters that the media likes to pick up on and just beat us to death with, through all things if we continue to love God, if we continue to be faithful to the covenant that we've made with Him, He stands ready to make those things work to good for us. Again, that doesn't mean we will go unscathed but in the end all things will work to good for us.

The real thing I wanted to share this morning is we can spend all our time talking about 'Oh my goodness this is going to happen or that's going to happen.' Or, we can refocus and say, 'So, what am I supposed to be doing about this? What's that mean to me?'

I want to share just a little thing with you. Several weeks ago I had a friend of mine call me. He's a guy who has had lots and lots of problems. I think he is in his early 50s and basically he's at a point where he has nobody in his life. That is the result of his own choices but still it leaves him where he is, alone. If you are around him it wears you out because he doesn't have any hope and he's just messed everything up. Anyhow he called me and said, 'Sherman, my son committed suicide yesterday.' It's the only child he has and they probably haven't talked for seven years so it's not like he had a close relationship with him but he called me and wanted me to come up and talk to him so I did. I won't go into the whole story but I ended up going several times to see him.

I was sitting and thinking about this later on and realized that the whole time I was sitting there talking to him I never once worried about the last days. Not once. I never once worried about what's going to happen to the economy or all the stuff that we worry and talk about. So I was impressed with this thought and wanted to share this with you this morning. This covenant that we've made with the Lord to take upon us the name of Christ and thereby take upon us His

personality and His characteristics never changes no matter what the circumstances are so while everybody else is running around screaming about the sky falling and all this kind of stuff, I hope what we will be doing is taking a look at what this covenant means. What is it that God has asked of us? This is kind of why I started with the scripture that I did. He's asked us, I think, to stay focused on the fact that the souls of men are precious to Him and if we will put our hand in His and walk with Him and obey His commandments, it will open the door to Him to work with us. In fact, the scripture says loving Him is obeying Him. He doesn't ask us to obey Him because He wants to boss us around but there's just a truth. There's a way that works and a way that doesn't and He wants us to obey Him so He can work with us and bring this joy that's talked about in my opening scripture into our lives that comes from serving others and being there for them. If we do this we don't have time to worry about what's going to happen tomorrow.

It is interesting to me that if you go to Matthew 24 you read about the end times but if you go on to Matthew 25 you hear the message I want to dwell on this morning. It is where Christ talks about "inasmuch as you do it unto the least of these you do it unto me" and He goes through a whole list of things and ways that people have or have not responded to the needs of those around them and by doing that you have or haven't responded to Him.

I guess what I'm trying to say this morning is so simple you probably already know it. Sometimes I think we worry about a lot of things we don't need to worry about. We have failed to acknowledge that all things are in Christ's hands and control. We don't take into consideration the fact He's told us ALL THINGS will work to good for us if we trust Him. Our duty then is to be sensitive to the needs of the souls of those around us. That never changes. The other part of that is those needs are always, always there. If you really care and want to be about God's work, you don't have to look very far. You probably wouldn't even have to leave your own house. You'll find needs right there.

It's important that we be sensitive to each other, all of us right here in this group and in our own families but it's also important for us to remember that Christ said He doesn't come to minister to those who are well but He came to minister to the sick because they were the ones who needed it. So I wonder how comfortable we are sometimes ministering to the sick. I don't mean just physically sick obviously. Do we just get in our own little realm? Do we just try to reach out to our own little group? That's good. That's not bad. But are we also available for the Lord to use us to reach out to some that look pretty sick to us but they are still His children.

In our early morning devotions this morning, Mike talked about Samuel's prophecy. When Samuel came and



spoke to the Nephites the things he talked about seemed to them to be just kind of impossible. They didn't think those things would ever happen. They thought it was foolishness. Some of them did respond but most of them didn't and yet a few years later everything he prophesied happened. When Christ was crucified all these things that Samuel told them would happen did happen. Many of the cities were destroyed, etc. When we look at the scriptures that talk about the last days we may worry about the bad things the Lord has decreed for the wicked too but what happened? It says that the more righteous were saved and were spared and that their mourning was turned into joy and that their lamentations were turned into praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord, Jesus Christ their Redeemer.

This morning I wanted to convey that we should quit worrying about all the awful things that everybody talks about and all the awful things that go on around us. Not that we're not insensitive to them and that we don't pay attention and know what's happening, but I want us to quit dwelling on those things and go back to looking at what it is Christ wants of us. What have we all covenanted with Him to do? When we really get engaged in His work, when we really start reaching out to the people around us and let Him use us to participate in their lives in ways that will bring them unto Him, we'll have joy in the midst of all the confusion, etc. I'm not saying that we do this just so we can get something for ourselves. I just mean our lives will change. There will be a reason for us to live and we won't have to worry about what's going to happen thinking maybe I should give up now! No, there'll be all kinds of reason for you to have joy and to rejoice. 1st Nephi 1:115 tells us that men are that they might have joy. This had been and still is God's desire for us.

You know when Samuel spoke to the people in Helaman 5 after he had told them all the things that were going to happen. Then he told them the reason that he came up on the walls of the city and preached to them. He didn't say that it was so they could go hoard food and buy guns and ammunition so that they could survive while everybody else died. That's not what he said. He said he was doing this so *that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning. That ye might know of the signs of His coming, to the intent that ye might believe on His name; And if ye believe on His name, ye will repent of all your sins, that thereby ye may have remission of them through His merits.* (66, 67) So his intent was to call the people, like all the prophets have done to repentance, so that they could have the salvation that comes to them through Jesus Christ in their lives and so they could share that with others.

I think we have an obligation today to share all of these things that we know because God has revealed them to us. But it is so that we can repent so that they can repent so that

God will be willing to claim us as His sons and daughters, as we profess to be here this morning, so that we can look forward to His blessings and not be always worried about the negative things that get so emphasized when we talk about the last days or the end of the world.

I hope that God through His Spirit will bear witness to you that what lies ahead of us is great and marvelous and He will bear witness to you that He stands ready to uphold you when you will listen to Him and claim His ways. That He stands ready to bless you and spare you and that there is no reason for fear but reason to rejoice and to know that His coming will be a great thing and not the terrible thing that the world talks about all the time.

I just wanted to encourage you this morning to look at the simplicity of the gospel, to find that old, old path that will enable you to walk with your hand in His, to fulfill the covenant that you've made, to be a blessing to those around you and to be His people now and forever.

[After my sermon Elyse Jordison's shared this testimony with me of what the Lord did for her.]

"I struggle with anxiety. Thinking about the end times, especially at night, always makes it worse. As I was getting ready for bed on Saturday night I was very worried about the bad stuff that's going to happen before Jesus comes. In my prayers I asked the Lord to help me not be scared. On Sunday morning I decided to fast, spending time reading the scriptures and praying before going to church. That Sunday Sherman preached on how we shouldn't be afraid of those things because God will take care of us. After the service Sherman came over to me and told me he felt that sermon was for me. I knew God had heard me! God is a cool dude."



*Thou knowest my downsitting
and mine uprising, thou
understandest my thought afar
off. Thou compasses my path
and my lying down, and art
acquainted with all my ways.*

Psalm 139:2-3



HANG ON FOR A LITTLE WHILE

Apostle Rex Curtis
Sibley, Missouri
November 10, 2019

Brother Tony Crandell read Psalms 100 as the Call to Worship. *Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.*

Like Nephi I came from goodly parents that were concerned enough for me and my sisters to make sure we went to church and learned of the Lord and were blessed. My Dad grew up in Independence, MO but he went to San Diego to join the Navy during the Korean War. He met my Mom there after he got off the ship and thought San Diego was a pretty good place. It was nice and warm there all the time. We don't shovel snow there and get sand out of our toes so he stayed and that's where I was born and raised. As a single person I moved to Missouri and gathered in when I was one month from being 30 years old. In 1984 I had pretty much

decided that the church didn't need me so I didn't need it and had about an eight and a half year hiatus, if you would, until I felt the Lord tugging me to come and do His work. I was blessed after I moved to Missouri. About a year later I met Penny and her three girls and fell in love and we were married. Our girls are now grown and out of the house so it's just me and Penny still trying to serve the Lord any way we can.

He called me into the mission field eleven years ago now, eleven years in October. I have found a love for this work. I try to go out in the mission field about three times a year for a couple of weeks at a time so I leave Penny for about a month and a half out of the year to fend for herself really with our business and our home. She's gracious enough to let me do that. I'm blessed to be able to travel to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have yet to hear it or have yet to hear it in its fullness because of the tithing of the Saints. I have been blessed beyond my wildest imagination. We're not rich but we're rich in the blessings of the Lord. That's where we find our wealth, isn't it? What we have here will go away but the treasures that we are storing up in heaven will never fade.

I'm a man of emotion and so I'll perhaps from time to time wipe my eyes because this is a love of mine. I'll tell you a quick story. When I was about 13 or 14 I started praying. I was ordained at 15 in the RLDS church to be a deacon but I knew even before that that I would need a companion that the Lord would have for me. I knew that it mattered more if I was going to complete the task that lay before me that I had a wife that was not only supportive but a blessing from God in our home. So I started praying when I was just a teenager, a young teenager. 'Lord, don't let me pass the right one by,' because in life we pass a lot of things by. We don't think of the great necessity of each other as much as we ought to maybe and so the Lord brought Penny into my life. I thought there was no way that I was going to marry a woman who had three kids already. I was a bachelor. I had had a dog but imagine having four beautiful ladies in the house. It was hard for me to imagine but the Lord took that thought from my mind and said, 'Don't pass her by.' So I didn't and my life has been blessed because of that. You can see the lives of others as you saw earlier that are blessed because of Penny. The Lord had something for us to do and we're working through that trying to figure it out as best we can.

You know we don't have a textbook these days showing us how to minister. When I was ordained a Seventy there were a couple of men who were Seventy previously but we didn't have a textbook of how to go out and do and so it made it tough to try to figure out how to fund a trip, how to go on a trip, how to manage the work, how to do all these things. Then I was ordained again to the office of apostle and the Lord called me to lead the Seventy, if you would, in our



quorum. In the Doctrine and Covenants it says the apostles' task is to give direction to the Seventy. Here I was looking for direction just a few years ago and now I am supposed to be directing those who are tasked to go into the field. Pray for the Seventy. Pray that their desire is full to go into the field and to continue the harvest. My job is to go into countries and open up new fields to take the gospel. I call the Seventy behind and have them come to help finish the work so we need a lot of help. We really do. The Lord has blessed us with three new countries in Africa. These countries have not had the restoration gospel in them prior to 2016 and now there are probably over 1500 baptized members in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. That's a lot and it's a lot to try and manage. I can't do it all. I go on every trip but I'd like to see more men in the field so feel free to volunteer.

The Lord loves these people over there. I wish we saw this kind of growth here in the States. I really do. I wish we could see one-tenth of this growth in the States in areas where we're struggling and yet when the gospel is preached in its truth and spirit the hearts of people respond. Talk about nations of people whose only hope is in the Lord. We know we have our hopes in a lot of things here. We're in the land of Joseph. We have enough and to spare and they don't have enough so lunch and dinner come by prayer for most of them. It's good to be able to share their testimonies with you because you see maybe a little different portion of the church because they're your brothers and sisters. We are blessed to be here in the States, the land that the Lord has preserved and set aside for this very special purpose. I'm going to read about that a little later.

That's enough about me. I want to talk about the Lord because that's what I like doing. I want to read to you from John 17:1-3 as an opening scripture. *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* That was the opening statement in the prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane. That's what chapter 17 is. I imagine most of us know that. He prayed this prayer in the Garden for you. What He did in the Garden was for us, for those who would come under the blood covenant. Remember the drops of blood that came from His pores as He begged the Lord for a blessing to be bestowed upon us. When I read this I read it as though these are those who were already His. He said God gave Him us and so His prayer was for us that we might know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent.

Just prior to Him going into the Garden we can read in chapter 16 I believe that He was trying to comfort the

brethren, the disciples. He had already done that as we read in chapter 14, 'You believe in God, believe in me also. I am going to prepare a place for you that when I come you might be where I am also.' Remember that scripture? I paraphrased that a little but He wanted to let them know that there was going to be a time when He was not going to be with them. They were still struggling in their belief weren't they? Didn't he tell Peter before he left, 'When you are converted, strengthen your brethren.' Here was a man who walked and talked with Jesus. He walked on water to Jesus and he still hadn't been converted to the point that Jesus was comfortable. He knew His time was about to come to an end here on earth.

He makes a statement in John 16:16-22 that I find interesting. This is Jesus speaking. *A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me; and, Because I go the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.* When I read that I looked over at Penny and said, 'This is us now. This scripture is as alive today in our lives as it was in their lives. Jesus was talking, of course, of His death and His resurrection. You won't see me and then you'll see me. I have to go to the Father and the world will rejoice for what's happened and they did but the disciples didn't rejoice they were sorrowful.

I kind of see us in that same position. We know of what's to come and the world is rejoicing because of the way they are and we're sorrowful. But He said at some point your sorrow will turn to joy. Jesus showed an analogy of this woman that is in travail. She is about to give birth now. I wasn't around when Penny gave birth to our three girls but I imagine from the stories I have heard from every woman who has given birth, it is not pleasant but as soon as the baby probably makes its first cry all that pain goes away, doesn't it? There's new life. Someone has come into the world and the Lord is giving new blessing. Jesus was trying to make this analogy that as soon as the joy comes you will forget all the sorrow from before.



Brothers and sisters, we're in a place in our world right now that it's just a little while. If you hear one statement I make today remember this: Hang on for a little while. We've got to endure this. The Lord's promises will be fulfilled. They can't return void to Him or He ceases to be God. We have a struggle in our nation. We have a struggle amongst the world. We have lots of different struggles but God's calling to hang on a little while and it's hard.

I moved here in 1993. We felt like the Lord's return was imminent. You didn't want to miss prayer service. The church was full because we thought at any moment the Lord was going to come. We had that feeling. I imagine it was felt around the restoration. It was sure felt in Independence. I was attending in a little group out in Buckner. If you didn't get to Wednesday night service by 6:45 you didn't have a seat. We had 80 people in the branch then but there are not that many people there anymore. People stopped hanging on waiting that little while. My voice to you today is the voice of encouragement. Hold on just a little while. Let's focus on that which the Lord has called us to do.

I wanted to get that out before I got too boring because I don't want to put anybody to sleep and then they would not hear the real message, the real intent of what I wanted to share today. I've shared this concept in many places. There are those now, even amongst us especially in our land, that rejoice because they think that there is no coming judgment. They think that since Christ isn't with us and He's not coming that their immoralities are going to be OK, that they can get away with anything they want and there won't be any judgment upon them. I can guarantee you that this land will have a judgment upon it. God has spoken it already. As soon as a land no longer believes in the Heavenly Father and forgets to worship Him He will bring judgment upon it. We see that with third world nations. I've seen it all over the world. Godless nations end up imploding and their people suffer.

Penny mentioned in the Sunday school hour that there is no word for stewardship in Africa. I tried to teach stewardship on the last trip to Africa. I was sharing and said this is your stewardship. Kingsley, our translator, said what is stewardship? There's not a word for that in our language. What is it? I said it's the management of your time and your efforts and your finances. That was the best way that I could put it to them. It was like staring at deer in the headlights when that concept was given to manage your time and your blessings. We need to eat today is their thinking so it's hard for them to think about tomorrow.

I was saying that there are people here who don't believe that judgment is coming. They rejoice in immoralities and that's in our world, the things that are going on. I don't really need to list those out. These things are really contrary to the belief of a Christian. In this thing we sorrow because we are

bombarded with it daily. Isaiah was given some insight in this matter. Turn to the Isaiah 5:20-21 verse. Some of you probably already know this scripture. It says *Woe unto 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! Woe unto the wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! He goes on to say Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.* (23-24) Isaiah might have put the year 2019 on a dart board and taken a dart and hit it on that year because evil is being called good and good is being called evil. That's where we're at in our lives, in our walk with the Lord, and our walk with each other. This makes us sorrowful but we have to continue to remember His promises to us.

Recently Randy Vick and I took a two-week trip to Africa. We try to get to see the orphans in Malawi a couple of times a year at least and then we needed to get back into Mozambique where the cyclone had gone through the village of Tete. That happened in the early spring of this year. Randy went to see what kind of disaster relief was needed and the Saints gave and they gave and they gave, and it was a beautiful thing. Randy was able to give funds to families who had lost their homes. These homes are usually built of clay brick and if they don't plaster the walls water rushing up against clay walls erodes them and they are gone. Some people were swept away, people that we knew, people that we had baptized. A dozen folks lost their lives.

Eastern and southern Africa are my region of the world that I am responsible for so Randy and I went back to see what had been done with the money that had been given to help them. We wanted to see what kind of progress had been made and how they had been a steward over that which was given to them. They did a wonderful job. Some of them have completed ninety percent of their homes. Some had walls that go about half way up and they needed some more funds.

We went and visited and shared. One thing happens when you go overseas. I hope that it can happen here. We get really focused because all you're seeing is your trip, your plan and there is stuff happening all around you. One trip into Mozambique we got caught in a riot. That was our first trip into Mozambique. We had just gone into a place to get a sandwich to eat while we were driving down the road. A riot was moving its way down the street and we were caught in the middle of it. They were throwing rocks and burning tires because some children had been stolen. The police caught one man and the people caught the other. The people wanted



the police to release the other man into their custody so that they could put an end to their lives. We didn't realize what was happening and were just caught in the middle of the riot so things happen around you but we try to stay focused on what we're doing. That's what the Lord was trying to tell His disciples and trying to tell us. Stay focused because it's just a little while and things will turn around.

I want to tell you about a couple of things that happened there. Numbers don't mean a whole lot other than there were a lot of baptisms. That's one thing that happens a lot but the numbers don't matter it's the story of the people. Penny always says make sure you tell them about the people. In Kataya Lunzu which is in Blantyre we showed up and Kingsley said tomorrow we're going to have baptisms. There should be about twenty baptisms and we thought that this was great. These are people now that are being taught by our elders that are there which is really good. They are starting to be able to teach the restoration gospel on their own.

The girls were busy filling the baptismal fount with those ten gallon buckets of water that they carry on their heads. The next day we showed up and there were actually 27 that wanted to be baptized. There were quite a few people that I hadn't seen before. One of them that caught my eye was this old guy. I don't know how old he was. It's hard to tell the age. Some people that I think are teenagers are in their 20s and some people that I think are 30 are 50. This old man was one of the older gentlemen that I had seen there. He could hardly move. There are steps down into the fount. He had arthritis super bad. His knees didn't bend. He didn't bend very well. I knew this because I had seen him get up and walk to stand in line. They line up down the row and give their name so that as they come into the water we know who they are and can take a record of their name and age. Then we bring it back to Independence, prepare certificates and take them on the next trip. Their baptismal certificate is like a form of ID to them. It's like our birth certificate or driver's license.

I helped this old man down the steps and I knew he hurt with every step. My eyes filled with tears. Of course, you are going to be ushering someone into the Kingdom of God so why aren't your eyes filled with joy? There wasn't much water put into the fount but there was enough. Some of the taller folks had to get on their knees. Now imagine getting on your knees in a praying position and then getting tilted back. That's a lot of stress on those knees. I tried to find a different way to baptize this gentlemen but every time I'd put his head in the water his feet would come up. This happened three times. I finally got a young man to get in the water with me and hold his feet down because this old guy was really struggling. I helped him out of the fount and gave him a hug. He looked at me and we held each other. He hadn't gone up the steps yet. As we held each other I whispered into his ear. I

don't know if he understood me or not. I said, 'The Lord's been waiting for you for a long time.' He nodded his head yes. Those are the moments that stand out to me. One by one people kept coming into the water. Those were beautiful moments. There are some that you know this baptism was extremely precious to and this gentleman was one of them.

We had two ordinations. Two elders were ordained and a priest also in that branch so now the first branch in Malawi has four priesthood members which is really good and they are doing really well there. We went to another village named Mwanza and there there was a man who was baptized in Malawi back in the spring this year. His name is Wanda so Wanda is in Mwanza in Malawi. I had been praying about some men because I felt that the Lord was really needing to call some men to the priesthood that they might be able to function on their own rather than waiting for us. He was one of the men who was ordained. As we shared that calling with this people they rejoiced and thirty-seven more people came forward to put their name on the list to be baptized but there was no water in the river that we had used the time before. The snakes were real heavy in the river rocks so the government had suspended anybody from using the river. So those people will be baptized whenever there is rain there so we need to be mindful of them. A new branch was formed there.

We took Wanda out to supper the night before because I wanted to share with him his call to be an elder. I wanted to read to him the magnitude of the calling. That if he accepted this it was a lifetime deal and he couldn't walk away from it. It's not just for a short period of time. He accepted that call but wanted to share something with us. He only speaks Chichewa. On the previous trip we had given a Book of Mormon to him even though he doesn't read any English but his wife does. You saw a picture of Margaret at the sewing machine. She reads to him the Book of Mormon.

Well, on this trip there were these guys that we would see running down the street. It was some sort of a festival thing but these guys would put on these really ugly wigs. They would cover their face with a mask. They would rip their clothes. One hand held a machete and the other one held a spear and they would run around scaring people. They do whatever they want to because no one knows who they are. This was happening in Wanda's village in Mwanza so he took the Book of Mormon to the village chief and read from Alma 8:79-84. We were sitting there having dinner and he said the Book of Mormon is a very powerful book. He speaks very broken English. I said yes it is a very powerful book and then he told Kingsley this story. He went to this festival and these guys were running around. These guys get away with a lot of crime because no one knows who they are. *And Zeezrom said unto him, Thou sayest there is a true and living God? And Amulek said, Yea, there is a true and a living God.*



Now Zeezrom said, *Is there more than one God? And he answereth, No. Now Zeezrom said unto him again, How knowest thou these things? And he said, An angel hath made them known unto me.* He just read this and said, 'Because these people are workers of darkness they think that they have powers.' Then he said 'there is only one God and that's the one who sent His Son Jesus.' That chief made a declaration that day to not allow these men to participate anymore in their festivals. These guys are now banned from at least that village. Wanda said, 'This book is very powerful.' That's the testimony of the Book of Mormon isn't it? It's just a powerful book to the convincing of men and women and children that there is a God and that He sent His Son Jesus and made Himself manifest to them.

I shared earlier about the baptisms in Mozambique. There were fifty-seven souls lined up on the shore as we were able to baptize them in teams. It was a beautiful moment. They were also confirmed by their own priesthood. We just basically presided over the service and that excited me. It's a lot to do fifty-seven confirmations and we did them all at once but they would take turns and that was a really neat thing.

What is the message to these folks? Here they are poor, downtrodden, struggling. What is it we can say or do for them to give them hope because that's really what we are giving them is hope. We tell them about the coming wedding but we tell them that yes it is bad right now but hang on for a little while. We share that message just to hold on. The Lord is not going to forget His people. He said there will be troubles and tribulations on the earth among the children of men but my people will I preserve. I hold that to be a truth that the Lord has said to us and given to us.

When we're there, we're focused and isolated. We don't have our little gadgets that are in our pockets. Luckily I left mine in the car or else I would really be in trouble. We don't have this bugging us all the time and we're able to hear that still small voice of the Lord directing us and guiding us. Because on this little gadget that we all hold we hear a lot of bad stuff and it takes our focus away from the Lord. It makes us think that everything is going to pot. 'Oh, we're done.' But I say the Lord is just starting to unfold His work. Remember that woman in travail. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.* (1st Peter 4:12-13) This promise given to us in 1st Peter is that which we hold dear too.

I started in John 17 and I want to finish there. These are a little different words. Remember these are the words for you from your Savior while He was going through His time of

anguish asking us to hold on and asking the Father to bless us in this marvelous way. From the 17th chapter of John I'll finish with this scripture starting with verse 24. *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.* (24-26)

That is the Lord's blessing to you that the love that God loved Jesus with might be in us also. Hold on just yet a little while. Cling to this glorious gospel. Cling to your Savior. Acknowledge Him and your Father in Heaven. Remember to pray every day. Remember those who are less fortunate. We live in the land of Joseph and have more than we need. The Lord is reaching out calling His children to the wedding of His Son. The rich and the wise and the noble nations have heard the gospel and have rejected it. That's in Section 58 if you want to look it up. Now the day of His power is coming when He goes to the poor and the lame and the halt and the blind nations of the world. That's the day we are in now and He's calling them to the feast of the Lord that they might be partakers of His glory even as Jesus said that they might see me in my glory that they might have my glory also. May God bless you and keep you.



JUST KEEP HANGING ON

Elder Tony Crandell

Lamoni, Iowa

November 17, 2019

Elder Gordon Winkler shared 2 Corinthians 4:5-11 as a Call to Worship. *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the*



Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

As I said last time I spoke I think it really helps to know how a particular topic is picked for the day. Today's topic is a result of two influences. One, an article in the **Witness** which cited Verse 5b of Section 59 of the Doctrine and Covenants and Rex Curtis's closing words last Sunday, "Just Hold On".

I looked for inspiring examples of "Holding On" and found related topics of commitment, perseverance, and dedication, so my examples today are not original with me but are testimonies of others. I hope to keep this hour in somewhat of a lighter mood, yet I hope these topics of conviction, dedication, and perseverance, will encourage you to "hang on just a little longer".

I am going to play a song titled "Keep On" which exemplifies the secret of how to just keep hanging on. [The chorus of this song is Hold On, Be Brave, Hold Fast, Have Faith, Pray Hard, Fear Not, Stay Strong, Keep On.] The second time through the congregation sang this chorus.

A journalist was assigned to the Jerusalem bureau of his newspaper. He got an apartment overlooking the Wailing Wall. After several weeks he realized that whenever he looked at the wall, he saw an old Jewish man praying vigorously. The journalist wondered whether there was a publishable story there. He went down to the wall, introduced himself and said: "I see that you come every day to the wall. What are you praying for?" The old man replied: "What am I praying for? In the morning I pray for world peace and then I pray for the brotherhood of man. I go home, have a glass of tea, and come back to the wall to pray for the eradication of illness and disease from the earth."

The journalist was taken by the old man's sincerity and persistence. "You mean you have been coming to the wall to pray every day for these things?" The old man nodded.

"How long have you been coming to the wall to pray for these things?"

The old man became reflective and then replied: "How long? Maybe twenty, twenty-five years."

The amazed journalist finally asked: "How does it feel to come and pray every day for over 20 years for these things?"

"How does it feel?" the old man replied. "It feels like I'm talking to a wall."

I am sure that praying at that wall got old, but at least, HE WAS COMMITTED TO DOING IT! He was "holding on!" A prime example of *Persistence and Perseverance*

In our text, Matthew 10:34-39, Jesus speaks of true commitment to Him. He is talking about loyalty, allegiance, dedication, etc. Verse 34 reads *Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.*

On the surface, these words sound bad. We might think, "But I thought Jesus was the prince of peace? Why would He



want to bring a sword for fighting?" The point of the text is that if we are truly committed followers of Christ we will make some enemies in this world! Some people will not like us because of our faith. Some people don't like good people! They don't like do-gooders or Christian people of any kind! After all, did not the people of Jesus' day crucify Him? And no one was better or did better than Jesus. How then can we expect different treatment in this world?

John 15:18-19 says *If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.*

I don't think anyone could say anything bad about Billy Graham. No one has ever accused him of wrongdoing of any kind. But, down through the years, Billy Graham received some negative, nasty mail and perhaps even some hate mail. Why? Because of the stand he has taken for Christ all his life. Matthew 10:35-36 says *For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.* Jesus did not purposely want to cause trouble in any household, be that father and son, daughter and mother, etc. But if a person makes a strong commitment to Christ it may well cause some trouble or division in the home.

We have heard stories of Orthodox Jews accepting Christ as their Savior. We call them Messianic Jews. Their whole family ends up disowning them. That does happen in some places and countries. If a person chooses to follow Christ, they may be completely ousted by their family and friends!



You heard Rex tell about that last Sunday.

Matthew 10:37 says *Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* Jesus didn't say we couldn't or shouldn't love our family members. He was just saying that we should love Him most of all! And when you consider everything He has done for us and will do for us, that is not asking too much of us. True commitment to Christ means that we will love Him most of all and put Him first over all!

A missionary society wrote to David Livingstone (missionary to Africa – 1813-1873) and asked, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you." Livingstone wrote back, "If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all." That's true commitment.

Let's consider some important areas where we need a greater commitment to Christ: 1- Worship 2- Work

1. COMMITMENT TO WORSHIP. Hebrews 10:22 says *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.* "Let us draw near to God. That's worship. Normally, we think in terms of "going to church" in order to worship God. But true worship starts at home.

It is said that a bird can go nine days without food, a man twelve days, a dog twenty days, a turtle five hundred days, a snake eight hundred days, a fish one thousand days and insects twelve hundred days. Wow! We certainly wouldn't want to be an insect. Aren't you glad that you are higher on the creation scale than an insect?

Even though we humans may be able to go 12 days without food, we won't! I don't even want to go four hours without food. What's your favorite food: beef steak, fish, catfish, salad, Chinese, Italian, Mexican, American or all the above? We all have our favorite foods and favorite eating places. Sandra and I love to go to the Longhorn Steak House. I really enjoy the hot bread they serve. Most of the time we share two loaves! Bread is for the body but what about bread for our soul?

Matthew 6:25 says *Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?* Our actions often say that nothing is more important than food and clothing, but Jesus said there was more to life!

In Matthew 4 Jesus was hungry after fasting 40 days and nights. Satan tempted Jesus by saying, *If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread.* In Matthew 4:4 it says *Jesus answered (Satan), It is written: 'Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*

True spiritual nutrition comes from the Word of God. We

get nourishment from scripture that we can't get anywhere else. One concerned young man wrote: "I'm 15, and I've been a Christian for years. I don't struggle with sexual addiction or swearing or some of the other problems guys have. I try to be a good person, yet I feel as if I'm falling away from God. Even though I pray every day, I rarely read my Bible. I haven't even opened it in a long time. I really desire a strong relationship with Christ, but I feel too busy to do anything about it." What a perceptive 15 year-old! He recognized his need for Bible reading and that the lack of it was causing him a spiritual loss.

Busyness is a definite spiritual killer. And even though we may pray with some regularity we must also read. Communing with God is not a one-sided deal, or it should not be. We must not do ALL the talking as if we had all the answers to life. We need to be listening as well. We need to be listening to what God has to say. He has all the right answers to life, which are contained in Scripture.

We all need a greater commitment to Christ in our personal worship and this includes Bible reading and study. Not a day should go by that we don't read a portion of God's Word, at least a small portion. The Word of God is powerful! It can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves! It can shape our lives and fill our hearts like nothing else can do! It is the living, eternal Word of God!

Of course, personal worship is also a matter of prayer and praise.

"A friend is one who knows us, but loves us anyway." - Jerome Cummings Do you have a friend like this? Yes, you do, whether you realize it or not. The Lord Jesus is the BEST friend you have. He is always there for you, always rooting for you even when you're down and out. He loves you no matter how bad you fall or fail. Consequently, it seems only reasonable that we should want to spend time talking to Him.

I encourage you to read Doctrine & covenants 59:5b. I can't encourage you enough to talk to the Lord continuously throughout the day...whispering prayers of all kinds...asking, seeking, blessing others, praising Him for His goodness and gifts. The more we bless Him, the more He'll bless us!

Several years ago I spent one night a week for two years recording the testimonies of Bill Ballantyne. Bill wrote a forward to these testimonies that said: *During my lifetime I was privileged to have many friends and to serve many people through my ministry. It is my wish, as you read these testimonies and spiritual experiences, that you will find them interesting. But even more, that you will see the interaction and love of God in the lives of the friends and acquaintances I had the privilege to know, love and serve.*

I don't know whether you the reader have ever had a spiritual experience or not. But, for the most part, mine came as a result of my daily prayer with God. I took the Lord at His word when He said that He would reason with man, like one man with another. I have trusted in that promise and have always laid my life openly and honestly



before the Lord in that manner each day.”

“And now come, saith the Lord, by the Spirit, unto the elders of his church, and let us reason together, that ye may understand: let us reason even as a man reasoneth one with another face to face.” —Doctrine and Covenants 50:4a

On a daily basis, early in the morning, through the day, and at night, I would lay my concerns and plans for the day before the Lord. I never asked for a specific experience; the experiences that I did have were just the Lord's way of showing me His will. A line from the song *It Is No Secret What God Can Do* has been running through my head. Those who read these accounts may wonder “How in the world can that be?” Everything that is written in this book is absolutely the way it happened and is described the best way I can explain it.”

In conclusion, dear people, let me admonish you to always take the Lord into your confidence in everything you do. Every day, put your whole life before the Lord asking Him if what you have planned to do, is the right thing to do. Ask Him to show you the right way or confirm the plan that you have in your mind. When the time comes for a decision and He has chosen not to manifest something unto you, then ask the Lord again what you should do, saying, “Lord if, in Your wisdom, You do not choose to tell me what I should do, then the way that I decide to go may be the right way”. I assure you the Lord will not desert you. If you are humble, He will always direct your mind in your work.

It is my prayer that my family and friends will read these words and by my experience and testimony “to trust in the Lord's concern for our welfare and His love for us” as He has invited us to do. “The Lord is but a ‘prayer away’ from our presence.” I have felt that holy presence numerous times and have heard Him speak to me in that “still small voice.” May the Lord bless you in your life's journey is my prayer!
Bill Ballantyne

Hebrews 10:25 says *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another —and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Commitment to worship should also include public worship with the church and the Lord's Day worship at His table.

Billy Graham said, "Jesus spoke about the ox in the ditch on the Sabbath. But if your ox gets in the ditch every Sunday, you should either get rid of the ox or fill up the ditch." And that's the kind of commitment that we all should have when it comes to worship of the Lord! Folks, regardless of the type of work we do in life, we are serving the Lord. We are His. We are His representatives and not just in church. Consequently, He expects us to do our best work at work.

I tend to believe in the old philosophy: If a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well. I don't like slipshod work, poor service, or half-baked bread. As representatives of Christ in this world we must do our best and give our best.

Dr. Ironside, (Henry Allen "Harry" Ironside was a

Canadian-American Bible teacher, preacher, theologian, pastor, and author who pastored Moody Church in Chicago from 1929 to 1948.) when a boy, helped his widowed mother by working during vacations, Saturdays, and when out-of-school for a Scottish shoe worker who was a Christian. He posted Bible verses all over the shop so that everywhere one looked, he would see the Word of God. No package went out to a customer without a tract or a word of testimony, and many came back for salvation.

“I won't take my religion from any man who never works except with his mouth.” - Carl Sandburg

“The reason why worry kills more people than work is that more people worry than work.” - Robert Frost

“There is no substitute for hard work.” - Thomas Edison.

James 1:22 *But be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only.*

Romans 12:11 *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*

An African preacher was overwhelmed and overcome by rebels who demanded that he renounce his faith. He refused. The night before they took his life, he wrote the following lines on a scrap of paper: *I am part of the "Fellowship of the Unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I've stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, chintzy giving, and dwarfed goals! I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by presence, learn by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power. My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, let up, or burn up till I've preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up, and stayed up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know all is said, and work till He comes.*

And when He comes to get His own, He'll have no problems recognizing me. My head and my shoulders will be upright. My hands will be raised in worship and submission. I will be ready.How about you?





BE THANKFUL FOR THAT GLIMMER OF HOPE

High Priest Joel Loving
Lamoni, Iowa
November 24, 2019

To begin his sermon Brother Loving shared what he termed, ‘a virtue chain’, from Moroni 8:29: *And the first-fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith, unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins; and the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart, cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.*

Thanksgiving

The first Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1621 over a three-day harvest festival. It included 50 Pilgrims, 90 Wampanoag Indians, and lasted three days. It is believed by historians that only five women were present.

George Washington desired a national holiday to commemorate a day of Thanksgiving, but Thomas Jefferson opposed it. Eventually, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving a national holiday on October 3, 1863 after Sarah Joseph Hale, the woman who wrote “Mary Had A Little Lamb,” convinced Lincoln to make Thanksgiving a national holiday after writing letters for 17 years.

Context of our journey

Doctrine & Covenants 128:8b-c says *yet it is incumbent upon the Saints while reaping the benefits of these organizations (gentile laws and necessary associations in community) to so conduct themselves in the carrying into operation the details of their organizations as to be **in the world but not of it**, living and acting honestly and honorably before God and in the sight of all men, using the things of this world in the manner designed of God, that the places where they occupy may shine as Zion, the redeemed of the Lord.*

The sobering reality of pervasive darkness

I. John 14:30: *Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of darkness, who is of this world, cometh, but hath no power over me, but he hath power over you.*

II. Ephesians 2:1: *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, **according to the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;*

III. D & C 3:17: *And now, behold, whosoever is of my church, and endureth of my church to the end, him will I establish upon my Rock, and **the gates of hell shall not prevail against him.***

IV. 3 Nephi 5:102-106: *Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, **but deliver us from evil.** For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

We begin out of desperation

I. Matthew 14:29: *And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. 30 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might **only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched**, were made perfectly whole.*

II. Matthew 9:26-28: *And, behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself, *If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.* But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, *Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.**



I recall a true story that I came across some years ago when I was researching the topic of depression in young people while writing curriculum for high school dropouts. In this account, a woman in her twenties had been struggling with drug and alcohol addiction along with several attempts to take her own life. From her personal story, she recalled the event that eventually allowed her to climb out of the deep hole her life was in and put things back together. It was one tiny but powerful detail from the night she had decided to end it all.

A lot of consideration had gone into her decision to commit suicide and she decided to call her father who lived across town on the phone to hear his voice one last time before she took her life. It was not a long conversation and though her voice quivered several times, she was able to awkwardly say goodbye without letting on to her plan. After hanging up the phone, she slowly went to the medicine cabinet, took one final look into the mirror of that sad and mournful face, reached for enough pills to do the deed and was interrupted by the doorbell.

As she went to see who it could be, the outline of her father opened the front door and stepped into her apartment with a look of panic in his eyes. He was barefoot. Now that's not a particularly significant detail perhaps. I mean footwear isn't always so critical, but to her in that moment, in that circumstance it offered that glimmer of hope necessary to overcome the darkness in her life. She realized in an instant that if her father was so concerned about whatever he heard in her voice on the phone, to race over without even putting on shoes, well... maybe there was reason to live. She did matter after all!

Kacey's story

Some of you know about our daughter Kacey's recent miscarriage. I won't go into a lot of detail here, but I was alone with her for part of that drama. She was losing a lot of blood and we couldn't seem to get it stopped. I remember holding her in my arms as she lay feint on the floor crying that I would not leave her. As a man, I cannot imagine what it is like to carry life inside me, nor the depths of despair when that life is literally ebbing away, but I do know what it is like to hold a child in my arms and pray with all my might, clinging to hope in the midst of life's most trying circumstances.

We lost her baby that night and don't really know how close we came to losing her, but you cling with every fiber of your being to a mere thread of hope that shines through the doubt and darkness in those moments. She was losing consciousness and strength and way too much blood. This couldn't go on much longer. Kacey ended up going by ambulance to the hospital where they gave her a unit of blood before flying her up to Des Moines where they put two more units of blood in her.

She has recovered her health although it took some time. I remember a small detail Kacey recounts from the night

before the trouble started. She had gone to the bathroom and as she laid back in bed in prayer (she had begun the miscarriage and blood loss) a distinct and clear inspiration came from the Holy Spirit as if it was speaking to her, "I will never leave or forsake you." What a profound reassurance offering divine hope at the outset of her ordeal. Praise the Lord for His merciful ways and hope of His love and protection.

Putting these stories into five principles (Our virtue chain)

- A. We must start in a place of humility
 - I. Humility allows us to see the divine perspective
- A. Truth comes from above and brings order
 - II. Arrogance blinds us to the divine perspective
- A. Deception comes from below and brings disorder
 - B. We catch a Glimmer of Hope
- C. We exercise a Particle of faith
 - D. We act with an ounce of righteous determination
- repeated
 - I. Connects us to divine truth with great insight and blessing
- E. We bind these together with a strand of virtue
 - I. Virtue is goodness and moral righteousness

Final Thoughts

For the sake of our time which is now short please bear with me as I consolidate this message into its conclusion.

The father's heart and children's heart in Malachi 4:6 are a similitude of all mankind turning our whole heart as one to our Heavenly Father and His heart's desire to love us and be with us fully in the Kingdom of God having resurrected mankind's spiritual disconnection and death in the Garden of Eden. That stupendous achievement awaits a united heart's (singular) desire on our part to fulfill what God ultimately wants. This then is the *glimmer of hope* we must cling to and act upon in response to this Holy invitation from our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ. It is sacredly offered, and it has reached your ears this day, by His will. Surely, we have much to be Thankful for!

2nd Nephi 3:54-55: *May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite? O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road?*

As long as we are obedient by honoring these righteous covenants in humility, we remain connected and cling to that hope of Christ in His divine plan to resurrect the full spiritual connection with Him, living in His presence in the Kingdom of God, Zion redeemed.

(Continued on back page)

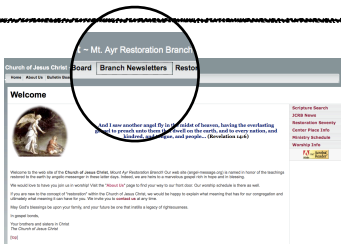


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And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for 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)

(From page 19 - Joel Loving Sermon)

Remember...

- From a place of humility
- Glimmer of Hope
- Particle of faith
- Ounce of righteous determination
- Bound together by habits of virtue

In this season of Thanksgiving, I pray there is more than a glimmer of hope, in our lives. That we have the full realization of hope, faith, and determination, all bound by virtue, in manifestation of His Kingdom on earth here and now. I cling fervently to that hope.



*MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY
NEW YEAR!!*

