

June 2021

Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

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Silent, Strong Dad

Karen Boyer

He never looks for praises.
He's never one to boast.
He just goes on quietly working
For those he loves the most.
His dreams are seldom spoken.
His wants are very few,
And most of the time his worries
Will go unspoken, too.
He's there...a firm foundation
Through all our storms of life,
A sturdy hand to hold onto
In times of stress and strife.
A true friend we can turn to
When times are good or bad.
One of our greatest blessings,
The man that we call Dad.



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News & Notes

Please remember the reunions and camps that are being held this summer. Many of our youth will be at these camps. Many of our congregation and some of you receiving this Newsletter will also be attending or helping with the reunions/camps. We pray that God's Spirit will bless all of these endeavors.

The JCRB General Conference will be held August 8-11 at the Remnant Church in Independence, MO.



Communion Sunday
High Priest Robert Rolfe
February 7, 2021

Good morning. I am going to talk about eating and drinking. It seems like a good subject seeing that is what we come here for today. For many of you who didn't get much to eat and drink the last two or three days (we had a fasting weekend) you might say that's a good thing to think about as well. It's been quite a while since I've smelled potlucks coming into church because of us not getting together that much during the past year. Jesus had people criticize Him for eating and drinking. They called Him a glutton and a winebibber which means He must have liked eating and drinking or they wouldn't have been able to accuse Him of that.

What I'm going to talk about today has to do with that but it also has to do with Isaiah 6:9-10. For a long time I really struggled with what this scripture means. I don't know that I have figured it out yet but it has to do with something that I think you'll see as we get into this. *And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but they understood not; and see ye indeed, but they perceived not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert, and be healed.* I don't know why God would not want us to be healed but I think what He is talking about there is why Jesus talked in parables. If you remember He didn't say it straight out. I never had that trouble at home. Linda would say, 'Well I've already told you. I'd say, 'No, you didn't.' But she would respond, 'Yes, I did.' I guess if I heard it didn't matter because I didn't perceive it.

Today I'm going to be talking mostly from the Book of John. I'd like to put this together using John 3, 4, 5 and 6. Let me read what it says in John 6:48-56, 58. *I am that bread of life. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. But I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my*

blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up in the resurrection of the just at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

It says in here that after He told His disciples that that a lot of them quit following Him. This is Jesus and I have often said if this was Jesus why did they quit following Him. They said that this was a hard saying. If you take that literally it sounds like we're going to become cannibals, eating His flesh and drinking His blood. In fact it's strange to me because the Mosaic law says you are not supposed to use the blood. That was forbidden. Here Jesus is saying to eat His flesh and drink His blood and and you'll live forever. It's a difficult thing to think about that if you do it literally. I think that's what Isaiah was talking about. They weren't hearing what they were hearing.

If you remember Jesus had all these parables. One of the things that gripes me I guess is He asked His disciples if they understood what the parables were saying and they said yes but they didn't. I wished they would have said no so He would have explained the parables because He did that in one or two of them but the rest of them He didn't explain what the parable meant. If it was that easy to understand why did He talk in parables. The disciples struggled with that and if you remember Peter, when Jesus said, 'Are you going to leave too?' He said, 'No, you've got the words of eternal life.' So some of them were getting it. Maybe it's because I'm a man. I just don't get it.

I would like now to turn to chapter 4 of John. This is the story about the woman at the well. One of the interesting things to me is you find three cases in the Bible where Jesus was talking to a woman that probably we would say didn't live a good life; the woman who was caught in the act of adultery. They drug her to Him and threw her down and said, 'The law says kill her. What do you say?' You know the story. Another one was where the woman came into Simon's feast at his house and washed Jesus feet with her hair and her tears because of the life she had lived.

This is the third case where this woman met Him at the well. The interesting thing about this is in all three of these accounts you don't hear Jesus criticizing them. We would probably say they weren't a good person



because of what they'd done. I might point out to you that for those of you who don't know that the Jews were permitted to divorce their wives. They called it "putting their wife away." But the women were not allowed to divorce their husbands which shows you the gender studies needed to go back a little further.

This particular account talks about this well of Jacob. To give you an idea of the time frame. We're talking a couple of thousand years and that well is still working. I am amazed at that. A well that would work for 2000 years. There was a spring in there but that's part of the reason that this lady is saying this.

I might just add to this. I don't know how many of you remember your geography but Galilee where Jesus came from was up in the North and Judea where Jerusalem was in the South. In between was a place they called Samaria. It got its name after a city that was built there by the people who came in after the Dispersion. The Samaritans and the Jews did not get along very well. That's probably not an overstatement at all. In fact, one time the Samaritans threw dead bones into the temple. You can guess how that went over. Many of the really strict Jews, the Pharisees wouldn't walk through Samaria. They would go over across the river and walk around which is not a short distance.

Jesus apparently didn't do that. He apparently would just go through Samaria. I remember one time they were in Samaria and the scripture says they wanted to go in this town for the night and the Samaritans told them, 'No, you aren't coming in here. You are Jews.' I think it was James and John who asked Jesus if He wanted them to call down fire from heaven and burn them out? Jesus told them that they didn't know which side they were on. He wasn't there to take lives but to save lives. Even among His disciples they had this idea that the Samaritans were people you couldn't get along with.

They were coming back from Galilee and Jesus said specifically. 'I must needs go through Samaria.' I think the reason that He said that was because He knew that this lady was going to meet Him at that well. So they went into Samaria and got to this well of Jacob's. I can imagine that Jesus was tired. He had quite a schedule. He sat down on the well and His disciples went into town to buy food because apparently they didn't have anything to eat. It says it was about the 6th hour, that means about the middle of the day. It would probably be hot at that time of day. A woman came out

to get water. You might wonder why the woman didn't go out in the evening or morning instead of going in the heat of the day. She came out by herself. Does that tell you something maybe about her status in that village. Nobody wanted to associate with her so she came out to get water all by herself.

When she got to the well Jesus was there and said, 'Give me to drink.' At this point she is kind of saucy and giving Him trouble and says, *How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria? The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* (John 4:11) The Jews considered the Samaritans mongrels and the Samaritans didn't have much better opinion of the Jews. Do you remember Rehoboam and Jeroboam? Those were the sons of Solomon. After Solomon died they got into a civil war and Jeroboam took the Ten Northern Tribes and settled in what was then called Samaria and Rehoboam stayed in Jerusalem. They built a temple in Gerazim there and the Samaritans would go to that temple to worship rather than to the one in Jerusalem. Not only that the Samaritans followed the 5 books of Moses but like us if they had something they didn't particularly like, they rewrote it. Have you ever seen anyone who says I don't particularly like this scripture because I don't like what it says? Many of us may not actually rewrite it. We just skip that part. We don't want God telling us what we should do when we don't want to do it.

Jesus said to her after she said, 'You're asking me for water?' *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* (John 4:12) That's a little different than regular water? She said, 'Sir, you haven't got anything to draw with. The well is deep.' I think it was a hundred feet deep. 'How are you going to get this living water?' She is still thinking that He has to get this living water out of the well. She said, *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?* (John 4:14) I might point out if you knew she was a Jew she would never just go back to Jacob to get her descent. They always say the children of Abraham. The reason was Jacob in some respects was a scoundrel. He wasn't a shining light even though they taught Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever shall drink of this well, shall thirst again; But



whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:15-16) How do you do that? That's what I'm talking about when Isaiah says you hear and you don't hear. What could He possibly be talking about? He doesn't have any way to get water but He's going to give us everlasting water that lasts forever. How can that happen? It's obvious He's not talking about the water in that well. It's a different well, a different water.

Finally, the woman is warming up to this. She may not have been interested up til then but she says, *Sir, give me of this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus said unto her, Go, call thy husband and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband. For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly.* (John 4:17-20) I don't know how this woman was able to perceive this but she says, *Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.* (John 4:21)

I might point out to you in the chapter before Jesus is talking to Nicodemus who was one of the rulers of the Sanhedrin. He didn't get it and Jesus even answered him, 'You're a master in Israel and you don't understand this?' Apparently Nicodemus became a disciple but it sure doesn't appear in the 3rd chapter of John that he was a disciple yet even though Jesus started talking to him face-to-face because he said, 'How can I be born again.' Again Jesus is using a parable. You have to be born again if you are going to get into the kingdom. Nicodemus said, 'How can I be born again. I can't crawl back into my mother's womb.' He was taking it very literally. It's like Jesus telling the Jews, 'Here you have to eat and drink my flesh.' Do any of you not know what He is talking about there after partaking of communion?

So they have a discussion about where they should worship. Jesus told her that she needed to worship in Jerusalem which probably meant she was going to have to change some things about the way that she worshiped. Then the woman said something that was remarkable. *The woman said unto him, I know that Messias cometh, who is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things.* (John 4:27) Now there's an expression of faith and Jesus said unto her something which I never understood. *I who speak unto thee am the*

Messias. (John 4:28) Now He goes around telling all these people He did miracles for not to tell anybody. Don't tell them I healed you but to this woman He said, I am the Messiah. I don't know that He told anybody else that plainly. For those people who say that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah, that's not right. In this instance He did.

Then His disciples showed up at that moment and said, 'What are you doing? You're talking to a woman and she's a Samaritan. Why are you doing that?' I might point out to you that back in those days women weren't even taught to read and write. They weren't taught the scriptures. In fact not too long ago when my mother wanted to go to high school, her father said no. He said it was a waste of time to educate girls. Was it really that way in Jesus time? It had to do with social customs and ways of living at that time.

The woman left her water pot right there and went back into the city and said to the people, *Come see a man who told me all things that I have ever done. Is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.* (John 4:31-32) He preached to them and many of them accepted Him as the Messiah in this place even though they were Samaritans. He didn't have any problem with doing that. Yet you remember in another place a lady asked Him for something to eat. He said He came to the House of Israel and she said even the dogs get to eat the crumbs under the master's table. There was quite a salvation for the people there in Samaria.

I have a picture here to show you. You know the Jews had manna come down from heaven and Jesus said that He was not that manna but He was the bread of life. We all know that if you don't eat and drink you die. Here's some pictures of those who do not have enough to eat and drink and are struggling. You can find pictures like this all over the internet. I've sent money to Central America and Africa for that same reason. People are literally starving to death, particularly the kids. The reason is if your parents die in these third world countries nobody takes you in. There's no welfare department. There are no adoption agencies. You just beg on the streets and if you can't make it you die. One of the interesting things about dying from starvation is you can get to the point where even if there is food you can't eat because your system is so fouled up from going hungry.

What I'd like you to think about this morning and this is for you, if you look at those pictures do you



see yourself in those pictures? The reason that I bring that up is that you can starve spiritually even though you have all the food you want to eat. The Book of Mormon says to feast upon the words of Christ. That is because if you aren't going to starve spiritually you have to feed yourself spiritually. How do you do that? One of the ways is to read the scriptures and ponder them. Another is to pray and ask God to come into you with His Spirit. That's one of the promises made here today. That you will have His Spirit to be with you. If His Spirit is in you you won't die from starvation spiritually. The other side of eating and drinking is you have to eat and drink those things that build you up and make you alive.

I hope this has challenged you to think about what we did here today and I pray that God will bless you.

***In the Age of Truth Benders,
An Encouraging Perspective
High Priest Joel Loving
January 24, 2021***

Michael and I, as your co-pastors set up the schedule and put ourselves in this month of January to share our ideas. Michael took care of his part last week and it's my turn this week. As I prepared to speak today there were a number of things that I wanted to share with you, ideas that I had. Interestingly enough the direction that the preparation took was not to share my ideas, not to be wide but to be deep and to share something very simple and very precise. So, I responded to that and have prepared this for you.

I want to begin with a question and you can answer this within your own mind. Do you think as a people, and you can pick whatever size group you want whether it be your family, this congregation, the Restoration, this country, the globe of all humanity alive now, that we are equal to this moment in history?

I've titled this "In the Age of Truth Benders, an Encouraging Perspective." I want to use as a scriptural context Alma speaking to his son Helaman. Listen to these words that come from chapter Alma 17:1-4. *My son, give ear to my words; for I swear unto you, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God, ye shall prosper in the land. I would that ye should do as I have done, in remembering the captivity of our fathers; for they were in bondage, and none could*

deliver them, except it was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: and he surely did deliver them in their afflictions. And now, O my son Helaman, behold thou art in thy youth, and therefore I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words, and learn of me; for I do know that whosoever shall put their trust in God, shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day; And I would not that ye think that I know of myself, not of the temporal, but of the spiritual; not of the carnal mind, but of God.

As you may ponder the question, are we equal to this moment in history, I think we are characterized as an age of information bending. I hope you can see the truth comes to us from the Lord in one form or another and as we receive it and share it and publicize it, somehow it begins to get a little twisted and a little more twisted and maybe over a long period of time it even becomes completely different than it was originally intended. This is nothing new. This was evident and experienced in the Garden of Eden with the serpent and with Eve, and of course, in this age of information bending where things get twisted and we listen to all kinds of resources for the information that we want to enter into our minds and our hearts. We recognize we cannot make it. We will not be equal to this moment in history if we stand on foundations of pretense or bent truths.

So, how do we find God? How do we honor God in this age of truth benders? Granted we live in unprecedented times but we're not the first generation to face difficult challenges. There have been groups of people throughout history in our scriptures that have faced enormously difficult times and come through. I want to examine this with a wider perspective beginning with satan's deception in the Garden of Eden in Genesis. Just one quick verse Geneses 3:1. *And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* Was that a lie? Did he bend the truth? Was there some truth in there, but we did die. It's hard for us to understand the precise degree of understanding truths that come from the Lord.

Of course, out of this experience in the Garden of Eden, enmity was introduced into the world and into our live experience. It's done a few verses later in the same chapter verses 19-22. *And the serpent said unto*



the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. So, we have enmity and Alma in the 19th chapter talks about this state we're now in because of the fall from the Garden of Eden where we have this state of probation. You are on probation. You are in probation and in many ways, speaking of your life as a whole, this is your last chance. From Alma 19: 88-90 we read, *And now we see by this, that our first parents were cut off, both temporally and spiritually, from the presence of the Lord; and thus we see they became subjects to follow after their own will. Now behold, it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness; Therefore, as the soul could never die, and the fall had brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal; that is, they were cut off from the presence of the Lord;* (that was the death that did occur that was lied about by Satan) *therefore it was expedient that mankind should be reclaimed from this spiritual death; Therefore as they had been carnal, sensual and devilish, by nature, this probationary state became a state for them to prepare; it became a preparatory state.* Alma says the same thing in chapter 9 verse 41 about this probationary state.

I wasn't ready to talk about my ideas for the congregation but I was prompted to dive into the scriptures and share with you something more important. Into this trip into the scriptures and the word of the Lord, we will find more words about this day in history and what's happening to us so that we can understand how to be equal to this moment. Here we are, especially in this time in history in this probationary state. Mark 13:48-49 talks about how in the end, in the last days as the Lord returns, we will return to the days of Noah. I don't know how you respond to that. I don't know if that's something that troubles you or not but I would like to at least introduce the idea that that really isn't the highpoint of human history. The days of Noah were when the Lord was ready to wipe out nearly all mankind. It was probably one of the low points in history and yet here we are racing ignorantly at breakneck speed into this time. Anyway, this scripture says, *But as it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man; for it shall be with them as it was in the days which were before the flood. Until the day the Noah entered into the ark, they were*

eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

It's a time to be sensitive and aware and informed. The letter of Paul to Timothy in 2nd Timothy 4:3-4 says, *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.* That means wanting to hear what it is they want in their heart and not necessarily what the Lord would have to say especially as He would chastise them. *And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.* Made up, imaginations of the heart and the mind.

Also in 2nd Timothy 3:7, 12 which is talking about the men of today. *Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.* I believe that's referring to the awareness of Christ who is the center and core of all truth. We learn all these things but we're not really learning about what Christ wants and what's in His heart as a whole describing this period we're in. Here is something important that I want all of us to hear in terms of the encouragement of what's happening. We might want to ask. Where's God? Why is the Lord allowing this to happen? What happened in this country? Verses 12-13 say, *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. For evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.*

Now that may not be much consolation to you, that you should be prepared to be persecuted. But I share with you a perspective I think that the Lord wants me to share today as we try to be equal to this moment. We recognize that the great mothers and fathers and ancestors who have responded righteously to the challenges of their day have shown us and proven to us through the testimony and through scriptures we can be equal to this moment because we recognize corruption enters through self-deception and it comes from below. It's secret. It's hidden in the beginning but truth enters a humble and open heart and comes from above. So, we're caught in between righteousness and corruption to make a choice.

I remember a line from a Groucho Marx movie. I don't want to go too far into this but he was caught in bed by his wife. She'd entered the room and he was in bed with another woman. Of course, his wife was furious and he says this line which is just so classic of



today for me. “Well, are you going to believe me or your lying eyes.” That describes today. I think we’re seeing before us and not seeing the reality and things as God would have us see.

I want to go to a time in scripture when this is exemplified. It comes from Alma 10. It’s the story of Alma and Amulek. Zeezrom has been talking against them and then Zeezrom is being convinced of their words. I’m talking about how we have to make a choice between the righteousness and the corruption and where are we in all of this. I am going to give you examples of people and times that have faced this dilemma just as we face it now to choose righteousness. Zeezrom has been convinced and he’s starting to worry about the truthfulness of what Alma and Amulek have shared with him. I’m talking about the people of Ammonihah. I’m reading from verses 73-74 and it’s talking about Alma and Amulek as they’re cast into prison. *And it came to pass after they had thus suffered for many days, (and it was on the twelfth day, in the tenth month, in the tenth year of the reign of the Judges over the people of Nephi,) that the chief judge over the land of Ammonihah, and many of their teachers and their lawyers, went in unto the prison where Alma and Amulek were bound with cords. And their chief judge stood before them, and smote them again, and said unto them, If ye have the power of God, deliver yourselves from these bands, and then we will believe that the Lord will destroy this people according to your words.*

They’d been warned but they would not believe and they’re asking for signs. For some time they’re going in and saying this, slapping them and beating them and saying, ‘then deliver yourselves and we’ll believe.’ You understand what happens here, right? There comes a point where the Lord has had enough and Alma calls upon Him and there’s an earthquake. In a moment all those who had come to abuse them in the prison recognize not just the damage and the pain and their death but the finality of judgment that was just upon them that they will not be able to recover from. Repentance is no longer an option.

Here we are in our state recognizing, wait a second, the Lord is trying to reach us with truth. We’re being bombarded with all kinds of narratives that come from all kinds of sources. What are we going to pay attention to and invest in with our own lives? What will convince us of the truth?

Here’s another story from Luke 16:23-36. . . . *Verily I say unto you, I will liken you unto the rich man. For there was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple, and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried of the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus, evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you, there is a great gulf fixed; so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, For I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one should rise from the dead.*

It’s like we’re hearing the Christmas Carol and Jacob Marley with his chains coming back to awaken Scrooge to an awareness of what’s about to happen. But in the scriptures, it doesn’t happen that way. It’s Abraham saying, ‘You had your chance. You heard the truth. Oh, you wanted it in a special form. You wanted it in a way that would make sense so that it would be easy for you to make a decision.’ It doesn’t work that way. So, in this balance between corruption and righteousness, the Lord, and this is where we are, tries our faith.

Third Nephi 12:1-5 says, *And now there can not be written in this book, even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people; but behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people; And these things*



have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken. And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things, then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.

Have we received those things? There's more coming? I do believe that more came in the form of the Doctrine and Covenants but I believe there's more beyond that. I believe it has been withheld because as a whole we are not ready spiritually for it. The writer continues *Behold I was about to write them all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbid it, saying, I will try the faith of my people; therefore I, Mormon, do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord.*

So, we're being tried and we find ourselves in the midst of this dilemma and how to choose. Remember the story of Abinadi and King Noah? Abinadi is sacrificing himself. He allows himself to be brought before the king so that he can tell the truth and establish it. That's a trial. Are you willing to die to tell others the truth? Abinadi was. It says in Mosiah 9:14-19. This is Abinadi speaking. *And that ye may know of their surety, I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands. Yea, and I will suffer even until death, and I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me, ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day.* Remember how King Noah responded to that? He's beginning to shake. Like 'Uh oh. I am recognizing the truth.' *And now King Noah was about to release him, for he feared his word; for he feared that the judgments of God would come upon him.* The beginning of intelligence, fear of the Lord is dawning, but what happens? *But the priests lifted up their voices against him, and began to accuse him, saying: He has reviled the king. Therefore the king was stirred up in anger against him, and he delivered him up, that he might be slain.* He came close but did not come through and was not equal to that moment.

We could talk about King Agrippa talking with Paul when Agrippa says to Paul, "Almost though

persuades me to be a Christian." How do you think King Agrippa will face that in the afterlife at his judgment? Almost was persuaded to become a Christian.

We receive in clarity. Again from Alma these words out of Chapter 8:28-34. This is about repenting or being destroyed. *Yea, well did he say, that if the time should come that the voice of this people should choose iniquity; that is, if the time should come that this people should fall into transgression, they would be ripe for destruction. And now I say unto you, that well doth the Lord judge of your iniquities; well doth he cry unto this people, by the voice of his angels, Repent ye, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Yea, well doth he cry, by the voice of his angels, that I will come down among my people, with equity and justice in my hands. Yea, and I say unto you, (I'm always interested that we call for justice because we don't seem to understand as we demand justice it calls for the wrath of God which is the justice of God. Be careful. We should be calling for mercy. That's my point.) that if it were not for the prayers of the righteous, who are now in the land, that ye would even now be visited with utter destruction; (A few righteous saves a country.) Yet it would not be by flood, as were the people in the days of Noah, but it would be by famine, and by pestilence, and the sword. But it is by the prayers of the righteous that ye are spared; now therefore if ye will cast out the righteous from among you, then will not the Lord stay his hand, but in his fierce anger he will come out against you; Then ye shall be smitten by famine, and by pestilence, and by the sword; and the time is soon at hand, except ye repent.*

Here we are, folks, in this time in history. I remember the words of Isaiah out of Chapter 48:10, *Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.* Christians have never had it easy in terms of the suffering of their lives who were truly the Lord's children. Christianity is not a slippery, easy slope into heaven. It can be difficult. It can be tough. Life is difficult. Life is difficult for all of us. But here is the point. I have said all of this to come to this point. We want the blessings. We want the blessing of the return of the Lord. We want the blessing of Zion in our midst but we forget the blessing comes after the test. We're wanting the big test but we're not wanting the big test. If we were really thinking spiritually and with insight and inspiration, I believe we



would understand there's a big challenge because there's a big blessing coming. Are we equal to it? Are we as a people? It's the big one when Christ returns and heaven comes back to the earth. Zion returns and we live with Christ for a thousand years. It's the BIG DEAL and we're not going to get past an easy test to get there. It's going to have to be with a lot of sacrifice.

So, what is it I'm saying today? Where's the hope? Where's the encouragement? It's simply this. It is simply this. Out of all the things that we need to be hearing or all the things that we need to be paying attention to, all the input, all the information so that we don't listen to bent truths comes to us out of Doctrine & Covenants 81:4e-g. *And you are to be equal, or in other words, you are to have equal claims on the properties, for the benefit of managing the concerns of your stewardships, every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just; and all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may improve upon his talent, that every man may gain other talents; yea, even an hundredfold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church, every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.* One very simple thing to understand and comprehend. It's not so easy to do. I understand.

For no one can have power to bring it to light, save it be given him of God; for God will that it shall be done with an eye single to his glory, or the welfare of the ancient and long dispersed covenant people of the Lord. (Mormon 4:19) Our voice and vote may be considered meaningless in this culture but we know our prayers are heard and matter to our advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ.

There is great reason for hope and to rejoice for our allegiance shall remain to the truth through Jesus Christ. Our foundations are sure and shall hold up. We have the scriptures and though we haven't done well with them, there is promise in them. We are NOT defined by something some newscaster says. I am NOT what they think. I am defined by the reality and the straight truth of our God's judgment and NOT the narrative blasted in our ears. Are you defined by what you hear from others? Are you a racist? Are you a white supremacist? Are you one who has white privilege? I am going to get myself in real trouble but you better understand what I am saying.

I've decided that I may be a white supremacist. Now you are really going to listen. I have decided for this reason. None of us who are Caucasian are white. We're Caucasian. When the scriptures talk about white, they're talking about a soul. You could be from Africa and be whiter than we are. You could be from Asia and be whiter than we are. When the Book of Mormon speaks about white, it's talking about the purity of a soul. It's not talking about pigment, not to me. I don't read it that way. Now having said that, I am not a white supremacist. I certainly don't believe one race is any better or closer to the Lord than any other.

You know what your greatest role may be? You are a husband and maybe you are a priesthood member. You are part of a political party. You have a job. I think your greatest role is as a son or daughter of God. That's the one that really changes our life. That's the one that allows us to be called and belong to the Lord, to be His children, to be His family. Do you know what happens to enmity in that generation that chooses to have their eye single to the glory of God? It disappears. *And in that day the enmity of man, and the enmity of beasts; yea, the enmity of all flesh shall cease from before my face.* (D & C 98:5c)

In Hebrews we talk about what the Lord has planned here. *For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* (Hebrews 8:8-12)

No more truth bending. No more corruption. No more false information but directly from the Lord to our minds and to our hearts. Are you willing to pursue that in your life? We are now called on this day in history to be at our very best, the height of all we've ever been now in our hearts, in our minds, in our practices, both



spiritually and temporally and come through for our Lord for we are by Him, in Him and through Him equal to the challenge of this day.

Tomorrow will you rise and live with an eye single to the glory of God, every moment with every breath and every decision. Will you wake up with an eye single to His glory? Will you go to work with an eye single to His glory? Will you respond to the phone calls and to the conversations with an eye single to His glory? Will you make your bed, clean your house, do your laundry, do your job with an eye single to His glory, SINGLE TO HIS GLORY. Cut the rest of the stuff out and allow His blessings to come because those are the people who are equal to the challenge of this day and they WILL by the blessing and mercy of the Lord usher in the greatest events in our entire story. May it be so with you and me and this congregation is my prayer.

We Have a Labor to Perform
Priest Samuel Jordison
March 7, 2021

As a Call to Worship Michael Jordison read 2nd Nephi 13:20-30. *He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this, that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he can not be saved; Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen, that your Lord and your Redeemer should do: For, for this cause have they been shewn unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water: and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire, and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; And ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye enter in by the way, ye should receive. And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask, if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far, save it were by the word of Christ, with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save; Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye*

shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

Good morning, everyone. It's good to be with you this morning. I have about 9 pages of notes and if you have preached before you know that sometimes you don't use any of them. Sometimes you just end of using part of them.

Not too long ago Zoey and I were reading through the Book of Mormon even though we have kind of gotten off track recently. We wanted to start in chronological order so we began with the book of Ether. After we finished Ether we did not want to go back to 1st Nephi so we ended up hopping around a little bit. We read some of Enos and Jacob and we also read Moroni. I think that was the most recent book that we read.

Moroni to me sticks out as a unique book because throughout the Book of Mormon you have Nephi and Jacob and Jacob's sons and grandson writing and then you have Mormon abridging all the other records trying to paint a clear picture of the gospel in plain and simple terms so that any one can understand it. Mormon gives the plates to his son Moroni and Moroni has the job then of writing the last statement or the last sentence you could say to the Book of Mormon.

If you have ever been in an English class you know that you are probably told when you write a paper to tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them that and then tell them what you just told them. Moroni had the job of telling everyone who would eventually read the Book of Mormon what was just told through the previous pages. I can't help but assume that the weight of that was probably pretty heavy on him because he tried to paint an even clearer picture and sum up, maybe you could say, what was said in all the books before. I think that he was probably pretty diligent in asking the Lord what he should add and what he should clarify so that when this gift came to us and then when it would go to the Lamanites, it would have a perfectly wrapped bow on it.

As we were reading through the book of Moroni some things happened in our nation, events that are still going on, that really discouraged me for the world and our nation. I was somewhat upset maybe with the response of those in the church. I am not someone who speaks up often and then when I do feel like I should speak up, I remember all the times that I didn't speak



up. If I didn't speak up then I probably shouldn't speak up now. I have enough hypocrisy in my life that adding more to it doesn't seem beneficial.

So I was really just discouraged through it all but as we read through the book of Moroni we came to the second to last chapter which is a letter that Mormon writes to his son that Moroni felt impressed to add into the plates. It comes from the 9th chapter of Moroni and when I heard this it immediately stuck out to me and answered my discouragement so I present it to you this morning. It is Moroni 9:6. *And now my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.* I present that to you this morning as the sermon. That's not all I am going to say but that really is the sermon this morning. I would like to break down and give this one scripture all of our focus to see what Mormon was talking about when he sent this letter to Moroni.

The first part says *notwithstanding*. If you look at today's definition it means *in spite of* or *without being affected by the mention factor*. The mention factor in this case would be their hardness or the hardness of the Nephites and the Lamanites. I liked that definition but I wanted to go to the 1828 definition because that's when Joseph would have been translating the plates and so what would he have been trying to get across? The 1828 definition says *the factor does not oppose or prevent the action from happening*. If we take their hardness, just how hard were these people that Mormon said *notwithstanding their hardness*. In the letter Mormon says that they rejected the gospel no matter how it was preached.

I have a friend that you probably know, Josh Pedersen. He does a lot of ministering in the homes and has gone on a lot of mission trips. His strategy is to hit them with "the sweet and then the sour." That is what he calls it. What he means by that is he is going to first let you know that he loves you and that God loves you. Then he is going to say because God loves him this is how it's changed his life and this is the sour part that we need to get rid of. These are the sins that we need to forsake because God loves me and I want to be close to God. That's Josh's strategy: hit them with the sweet and then you hit them with the sour. God loves you and now

you need to repent. I have also seen it done as the "sour and the sour" which is just you are a sinner so repent.

Here Mormon is telling Moroni that no matter how it was preached, the people did not want to hear it. He also says they did not repent. The Spirit wasn't with them and they had no love one for another. Moroni also defines that love as long suffering, kindness, it bears all things. None of that was with this people that Mormon was telling Moroni about. Mormon's personal record gives us an even clearer picture, a more violent picture. He says they did not pray. That they enjoyed killing. That the Lamanites themselves were sacrificing humans. This kind of hit me hard when I read this. It says, Mormon himself had no hope for them. It also says that there had never been a time when the people had been so wicked. Saints, that was the factor. Until things get this bad and even when things get this bad, it does not matter. It does not have an affect and it does not prevent us. That's what he is saying.

The next part tells us to *labor diligently*. We need to continue to work hard. It does not diminish, prevent us or stop us from doing what we have been called to do and to do it well. No reason can be given that changes our mission. When God set the plan of salvation in order, He had already planned for everything that was going to happen up until our day. I have seen those in the church preach from this pulpit and they have preached on things that are very important to them but do not have a lot to do with the gospel and it hurt a lot of people. I have seen other people who have decided that the church wasn't moving fast enough or it wasn't going in the right direction and so they decided to leave so that they could do better on their own. Those people have kind of floundered and they don't have a foundation because they have decided to strip away the things that really aren't important to them and then they don't have a basis to stand on.

I know of others who have placed blame or responsibility with those above them or in positions of leadership. They have said how can you be OK with what's going on in the church but if they are wrong the blame falls on them and not me. None of these are valid reasons. None of these are excuses that we could use when it comes to telling the Lord why we did what we did or how we went about His mission of fulfilling our covenant. I hope that resonates with you as you realize what Mormon was going through and what he was



telling his son that it couldn't have an affect on what they were doing.

The next part of the scripture says, *if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation*. Moroni knew the commandments just like we in the church today right? When we read the Book of Mormon we probably want to identify with Moroni more so than the other Nephites that were living in that day. Mormon knows this. Mormon knows that Moroni has also been baptized and so he tells him that if you and I should cease to labor we should be brought under condemnation. We know from Section 81 and other areas in scripture that to much is given much is required. If we go against what we know there is an even greater condemnation.

So what is the condemnation that we are talking about? In the Book of Mormon in previous chapters that Moroni would have read and known, Alma and Amulek are preaching to the people in the Ammonihah. They come to this people who are really kind of wicked. They are not very good. They are trying to tell them what judgment will be like, what the day of judgment will be like. Alma is telling Zeezrom who probably the leader of the opposition in this land and the people around that the day of judgment everyone will be standing before God, the just and the unjust. He told Zeezrom that if he hardened his heart and wasn't righteous that he would be doing everything he could to get out of the view of God. He actually says that he will try and take up the rocks and the dirt to cover himself up because you wouldn't want to be standing in the Lord's gaze. He says that those who died in their sins receive a spiritual death.

We saw that with Cain in the book of Genesis. He murders his brother and God comes to him and says, 'You are cut off from my presence.' Cains says that this punishment is worse than he can bear. This punishment is one that will follow him for the rest of his life because he knows he doesn't lose the knowledge of what he had when he was talking with God. If you think about it this way, every good thing comes from God. I have a lot of good things that are in my life. I just got married. That's an awesome thing. I was raised in a home where I felt love and I was supported. Probably the best thing that has ever happened to me was my testimony of Jesus Christ and the love that He has for me. That's a good thing. That testimony has affected me in a way that changed my world view and who I am

kind of in a way. I carry that with me wherever I go because a piece of that is always in the back of my mind. I am responding to things in a different way because I had that experience with charity. I have known good things and I assume that many of you have also known good things. The spiritual death where you are cut off from the presence of the Lord is where no good thing can be.

Condemned after knowing God. This is a really simplified version and we touched more on it in class. If you were to jump in a hotel pool, and you felt how nice it was or maybe it was a little cold and you got out and got in the hot tub and you sat in the hot tub for awhile and then you went and jumped back in the pool. The pool would have felt freezing at that point. It hadn't changed temperature but to you it was even colder after being in the hot tub. That is a very simplified example of those who know God and His goodness and then reject Him. It's important to know also that this is not done because God is evil or God wants to punish you but it's because we chose that. We couldn't stand in His presence. We have asked for no good thing.

The next part of this scripture as Moroni 9:6 says, *we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay*. He's basically saying we have a job to do while we are here on this earth. We talked a lot about repentance today in class which is a huge part of that but it is summed up in Alma 9:41. This is the answer to many questions that have been asked throughout time of what is the purpose of life. *Therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state, which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead.* How do we prepare to meet God?

When I was in Kenya we were doing classes with the kids. The kids don't like to give wrong answers. I don't know that anyone likes to give wrong answers but they know the three safest answers when you ask them a question. You will say, 'What do we need to do?' And they say pray, fast and study. That's all they have to say and then they can say, 'OK I answered the question and it was right.' There's no way to say, 'Hey, no that's not right.' Those are their simplified answers and they are right answers but they don't delve deeper than that unless you pry them out of their shells. Again those are right answers but to what end are we doing those things? Why are we praying? Why are we



fasting? Why are we studying? We're trying to be more like Jesus.

In 1st John he talks about when Christ comes back we, through our faith and our repentance and learning who He is and becoming more like him, will be more like Him. There's an elder in the LDS Church who does a lot of work with the older youth. He goes to BYU and teaches there. He's confronted a lot of times by Evangelicals who say you are trying to earn your way to Heaven through works. His response to that is, 'No, we are not earning Heaven... we are learning Heaven so that when we come into the presence of God we are ready. We are prepared. We are like Him and we are able to live there comfortably with Him.' This labor that we are performing we can look to Jesus and say if we are trying to be like Him, what are we supposed to be doing? It's a lot of compassion and it's a lot of love. It is a lot of praying, fasting and studying I think but it's drawing closer to Him that we may be like Him.

Doug Smith has taught me, Kelvin Henson, Andrew Smith, Brett Smith and Amos Johnson classes from Delbert Smith and Ron Smith's 'The Kingdom Way.' Every Sunday we would go and meet with Doug and he would teach us a class from the Kingdom Way. The next Sunday we would go back and we would take turns practice teaching it. We would teach it to Doug and the other classmates there. The reason for this was Doug wanted to be able when he and some us went on mission trips to be able to assign us classes. That way he wouldn't have to be at those classes but would know what was taught. The first class is 'What did Jesus teach?' The answer to almost of the questions is the kingdom of God.

When I went with Doug to Rwanda we had to split up the kids because there were so many. We didn't want to give the kids the same teachers the whole time. We wanted a little bit of variance and so Doug would teach the first class with one group of people and I would teach a first class with another group of people. Doug would know exactly what I taught because I taught from the 'Kingdom Way' classes. Then we would switch and I would teach the second class to the first group of people and Doug would teach the second class to the group of people that I was with previously. We both knew exactly where the other one had left off. A lot of times we knew the testimonies that had been used. The reason for this was Doug was able to know exactly what was taught and those who were taught were able to

pick it up seamlessly because they had just had the previous class.

Just like us when we come into the presence of the Lord and we try and be like Him and grow closer to Him. When we leave and are placed in different parts of this world, those people should be getting an experience where they are learning about Jesus through us, learning about what they are supposed to know, learning so they can repent, learning so they can enter into that covenant that we have entered into already. Eventually as the story will go, we will have a city here on this earth where everyone is able to walk and talk with each other like Jesus walked and talked and Jesus will be in our midst.

The last part of the scripture is *that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God.* A hero of mine in the scriptures was Captain Moroni because he was a conqueror I felt like, not an evil conqueror but any battle that he was involved in he seemed to come out on top. You wonder what type of man was he. He was a man whose heart swelled with thanksgiving. He labored exceedingly for the welfare of his people in terms of their freedoms and liberties but also their spiritual salvation. He was firm in the faith of Christ. He did everything 110%. He had no room for excuses or diversion from his mission. Actually, Mormon writes that the devil would have no power if all men and women were like Moroni. You ask, 'Why.' There's no room for those distractions and those diversions if you are focused solely on the labor. It doesn't mean he was never tempted or ever sinned but he was someone who if you knocked him down or he was tempted for a moment he would turn his focus right back to what he knew he was supposed to be focused on.

My friend, Val Brotherton, had an experience where he was asked to plough the fields one day with a tractor. Val had never done it before but he said, 'Yes, that sounds easy enough.' His uncle told him that when he got on the tractor he had to focus on one point, pick a tree or a fence post, something that he could keep his eyes on the whole time he was ploughing the field. That was how he would get a straight line. So Val got on the tractor and made it about halfway down the field, thought he was doing pretty good so he turned around to check and sure enough it was a straight line all the way down the field. He turned back around looking at the post that he was focused on. When he got done he



looked around and he could see right where he had turned around to look at his row. There was a big squiggle in his otherwise straight line that he had plowed himself.

There's no time for us to be focused on other things. The end of verse 6 in Moroni 9 states that we can rest our souls in the kingdom of God. We know that the kingdom is here for us today. Jesus said that. If we are willing to abide by the commandments that we talked about in class, if we're willing to abide by those commandments, we will have His Spirit to be with us. If we have His Spirit with us we will bear the fruit of the Spirit. Our words and our actions become aligned with that Spirit and naturally things happen that will be the will of God. We will be living in that kingdom.

This is what I think Mormon was trying to say when he was telling Moroni what we have read in Moroni 9:6. Today we can say that no matter what happens in this world, our allegiance is to Jesus Christ and His work. If we reject or let the distractions of this world diminish our faith and change our work and testimony, our fate will be the same as those who have been distracted. But if we will embrace the work to which we are called, we will draw unto Jesus that we may be like Him. We will know love, joy and peace like never before in a way that cannot happen by anything in this temporal world. I think it is a simple idea but not an easy one but that's where our families in our branch come in where we support each other. Where we are anchoring each other to the rock. As a matter of fact, we already have a bigger support system than Moroni had in his time by enduring to the end like our God had promised. I would like to read one of those promises to end with in the Book of Revelations 21:3-5. This is what we have to look forward to if we will labor diligently. *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful.*

I also wanted to mention the lighthouse. You've heard that talked about many times but you people,

myself, all of us who have the gospel, who have a relationship with Christ or profess to be called to be that lighthouse. Cheryl likes lighthouses and so when we vacation we've gone to a number of them. I think if I remember correctly every one of them was built on a rock and we have that rock. It's Christ. I think about the men who ran the lighthouses. When I go visit them I think it would have been neat to live out here. It's really nice. It's remote and beautiful. I don't really stop and think about and consider how much work that was back in the day to keep the light going. It was absolutely critical. If you didn't have the light going what happened? That's where we're at today. Each of us are called to be that lighthouse, built on Christ and we're called to do however much work and however much labor to pay the price to keep that light going for the sake of our fellow man.

One last thing. Those of you who are on Zoom probably can't hardly even see this candle at this point. You can see it's hanging there but you can't see the light from it. Whether we can see the light or not, the real light, Christ, is still there. He never goes out and we have an obligation to our brothers and sisters NEVER to go out. The other thing is if it was totally dark in this room, I would go over and blow that candle out because you know what? When our candles go out, when our light goes out, we're left in the dark too. So for our own sakes as well as the sake of our brothers and sisters, we have to keep our candles burning. I'm just going to leave it at that. I think that is what the Lord wanted me to tell you this morning. Don't give up! Keep your light burning and don't ever think it is all right to let it burn out - not even for a minute. You can't do that!

Communion - A Time to Remember
Elder Ed Colyer
May 2, 2021

Joel Loving shared: There are some exciting things to announce to you. This is the first communion for Gabriel and Jacob Smith having been recently baptized so we will be serving them first as is our custom. We are certainly grateful for that opportunity and that Christ is in their life to this extent.

I draw your attention to Mosiah 9:39-41. *And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and*



comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life: Now I say unto you, If this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

Elder Ed Colyer read 2nd Samuel 21:1 as his scripture. *Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.*

Have you figured it out yet as to why there was a 3 year famine? Well, it goes back to the book of Joshua basically and a covenant made with the Gibeonites by Joshua. I'll get into that a little bit later.

Most of you don't know who I am. Anyway I do not think you do. I'm just a little old guy that was born in Pleasanton, Iowa, in June of 1940. If you went to the same math school that I did, the one that Joel Loving's father taught in, you can quickly figure out how old I am and how old I will soon be. Back then in 1940 Pleasanton, Iowa, was one of the largest congregations in the Reorganization. Previous to that they were the second largest congregation in the Reorganization but they soon relinquished that to Lamoni when Lamoni became the headquarters of the church instead of Plano, Illinois. At that time many would travel to Lamoni on Sunday mornings or else simply moved there.

Anyway, as the story goes I was born in a two-story house located right on the Iowa-Missouri state line. Dr. Gamet, who many may remember, was a doctor in Lamoni, a church member and family physician to many in the area. When mom went into labor the good doctor was called and drove his Model-T Ford from Lamoni to Pleasanton to attend to my birth. (I understand the Model-T Ford was the vehicle of choice back then.)

As a side story several years later, as I began to crawl I happened to pick up a cockle burr from off of the floor. According to my mother I swallowed the prickly thing, prompting my parents to rush me to see Dr. Gamet in Lamoni. (Do you know what a cockle burr is? If not Google it this afternoon) Upon seeing me

and listening to my parent's story concerning their fear, the good doctor laughed and said, "Don't worry about it. It is all natural. Just keep checking his diaper and someday soon he will pass it." Sure enough my mother reported the prickly thing passed. So you could say my beginnings were a bit scratchy.

I didn't have a father when I grew up. Oh I did have a father, a biological father, but he decided he liked the others girls better than he did my mother. They were divorced in 1948. It was then my mother moved myself and my other brothers to Iowa. We were raised on a farm south of Davis City, Iowa, where my unmarried uncle and grandfather lived at the time. So, instead of a father to raise me, an uncle and grandfather filled that responsibility. It was here that I learned what a willow switch was in addition to other responsibilities. I also learned how to milk the cows. Slop the hogs and pick up hay, all those things you see on TV today. And, as any good parent, my uncle always gave me sage advice about speaking in front of a school function or church. That advice has pretty well stuck with me through the years. It was in 4 parts: 1) Stand up, 2) Speak up, 3) Shut up and 4) Sit down. You see his idea of a good speaker was he or she did not try to fill the full hour with added information. That sage information from the father figure in my life remains with me until even today.

My full name is John Edward Colyer spelled with a C instead of K. You will see my wife sitting out in the congregation, Cheryl Ann. We do everything together. She's my second wife and is a good one. My first wife died of pancreatic cancer after several years of us not knowing what ailed her. She had complications of diabetes where she had her left big toe cut off and then all the toes on her left foot. She had trouble walking so I had to buy a walker and then a wheelchair for her. When she started using a wheelchair I had to have a car big enough to hold the wheelchair and low enough to the ground that it didn't destroy my back as I folded it up and lifted it into the trunk. Oh, by the way I have hearing aids and sometimes you will hear me say, 'Huh, would you please repeat that.' My wife sitting out here in front of me can verify that. I don't like my hearing aids and sometimes I don't wear them on purpose and I think she knows it. Therefore she goes in the kitchen and whispers. That's the way it seems anyway.



I was ordained to the office of Deacon in 1955, and ordained to the office of Priest in 1972 in Norfolk, Virginia, which leads me into my communion story. When we went to church that first Sunday after we had moved to Norfolk, Virginia, this big tall fellow met us at the door and said, 'My name is Paul Dillon. What office of the priesthood do you hold? He didn't ask me what my name was. He was interested in my priesthood office and when I said Deacon, he said, 'Your responsibilities today are Invocation, Benediction and the Offertory and I'll take care of all the other things.' That was our first day at Norfolk, Virginia. Imagine that. I went to church that morning wanting to sit in the chairs like you are right now which leads me to what Brother Joel said back behind before we walked out. He said, 'It behooves all of our priesthood specifically but I am going to add you must be prepared when you come in the door. No matter what the service is, no matter whether it is a regular preaching service, a communion service like this or a prayer service.' I am glad that I prepared last Wednesday night because Brother Joel thought he was presiding. If I would have been quiet, Joel would have gone on with the prayer service and I would have been able to sit there but I was prepared.

Having said that, let's discuss what happens in 2nd Samuel 21:1. I'll read it again for you. *Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.* Interesting. I didn't understand it until I did some research.

So many times when we sit in Sunday school class we let people get away with saying it's in the scriptures or the scriptures say without asking where to verify. So many times Sunday school attendees say it's in the scriptures as if that's proof. I don't know about school teachers. I used to teach in the electronic engineering technology field in an associate degree program and I didn't let them get by with it. Sunday school teachers should say what the reference is so that we can all turn to it and verify.

It's been my experience if I have a question in scripture or about scripture I can find the answer if I look. Many times the answer to a question is a little bit down the line or a little bit back here but it's there. So why was there a 3 year famine? We were told because it was Saul. Four hundred years later Saul reigned in Israel and so it is Saul's fault that they are having that 3

year famine. Why is that? Well, it happens to be that the Gibeonites lived in a place called Gibeon. They had heard about Joshua and what the Israelites had done after they had crossed the River Jordan. What was the name of that city that they marched around 7 times. Jericho. The Lord told them what to do and they were to march around it one time the first day and one time the 2nd day and one time the 3rd day, etc. except on the 7th day they had special instructions. They were to march around 7 times and blow their trumpets at the end and then they were supposed to yell real loud. I probably wouldn't have any problem doing that but that's what they did and the walls of Jericho fell down. They were given instructions to go in and kill everything, kill everybody. Nobody was to live, animals included, except the harlot Rahab because she had promised the two spies that she would not tell those who were out looking for them which direction they had escaped. So the Israelite spies had told her to tie a ribbon outside her window and her household would be protected but there was a but there and it was that if she told which direction the spies had gone all bets were off. She kept her word and they kept their word. She and her household were saved and they went on to the next city.

Well the Gibeonites who lived in Gibeon heard all about this and the other things that were happening. I'm not telling you about what happened at Jericho though. There was a guy named Achan who decided he liked a few things that he found in the city of Jericho and he stole them. He took them to his tent and buried them. If you remember the story the Lord was very displeased. They had a big trial the next day. He was caught. He admitted it by the way. The Judge didn't have to do much questioning and he was sentenced to death along with his whole household. Harsh but that was the reality in those days.

The Gibeonites heard about all these atrocities and they were afraid so they dressed up as foreigners, basically lied to Joshua and his elders. They told them that they were ambassadors. They were dressed up in old sacks and they had old wine bottles. Their clothes were torn. They looked the part. It was discovered though that they were not who they said they were. Maybe just like the Lord sometimes finds out that we're not really who we say we are.

They made a covenant with Joshua and he made peace with them. They didn't have to worry anymore that Joshua would find out about it. He said that from



that time on they would be known as hewers of wood and drawers of water and their altar would be found wherever Joshua chose, not where they would choose.

Years later Saul gets angry with the Gibeonites and kills them. That was the reason for the 3 year famine. Have you ever thought that a covenant would last that many years? Four hundred at least and yet what Saul did was not acceptable before the Lord. Joshua made the covenant and Saul didn't follow through. Hence the punishment of the Lord.

Are we keeping our covenant today? Do we walk out of here today and go down to Casey's and joke and laugh with our friends? Do we just shrug our shoulders and think today is just another day? I remember a story given by Arthur Oakman. He was to preach one day and they were back behind the pulpit preparing to go forward to provide ministry to the congregants and the young pastor informed his priesthood that today was like every other communion Sunday. They would be forgiven. He looked at Arthur Oakman for approval and Arthur Oakman in his loud voice said, 'Brothers, we are forgiven when we are forgiven. It might be today and it might not be today. That is up to the Lord, but today we are to remember that personal covenant we made with Christ in the waters of our baptism. Regardless, today we remember that covenant made in the waters of baptism. We come just as we are. We will leave just as we are.'

So today I am asking you to pay attention to the prayers that are read by the priesthood prior to the serving of the emblems and to remember your covenant. When you leave remember the story of the 3 year famine and why it occurred and especially that your covenant does not ever end.

To The Saints of These Latter Days

FAITH and HOPE in the Lord's ability to do what He said He will do, must be the lifeline upon which we anchor our souls in these days. There is no other way to endure to the end. This is what we must teach our brothers and sisters, our families and our neighbors. We must help them understand what to do about the things they are seeing. Changing your mind about following the world and choosing to follow God, even in times of tribulation is the essence of repentance. It will result in a change of direction and behavior. It will not matter if our church is the

correctly organized one if no one has faith to trust and obey Jesus Christ. Souls are in the balance now.

The year 2020 brought great change to the lives of Saints the world over. That change came with surprising speed and for most it was difficult, unexpected and could not have been imagined or predicted. The coronavirus and the pandemic have been used by governments, even in democracies and republics, to seize greater power over their citizens, closing businesses, banning travel and forcing people to stay in their homes. This has brought greater suffering for much of the world. In addition to the loss of freedom, the loss of employment and income has made it difficult and sometimes impossible for many to feed, clothe and house their families. Public gatherings, even for religious purposes have been banned, with the closing of churches, synagogues, mosques and temples.

While the attention of the world is focused on the pandemic and its fallout, the adversary is able to operate more openly than ever before in our lifetime and those involved in governments are flexing their political muscle and reveling in having greater power over their citizens. Christians in China, Pakistan, Nepal and India have come under new and more deadly opposition, while Christians living in Western countries are subject to increasing persecution. The enemy has operated through secret combinations since the beginning of time, but now, emboldened by their recent success, they are speaking openly about their plans to dominate the world.

For most of its history, the United States has been a beacon of freedom to the world and a bulwark against tyranny. The saints may be shocked to see the adversary's plans revealed as the current US government openly embraces evil now more than at any time in its history, intent on forcing unholy requirements on its citizens. This drastic change in all areas of US government policy will have a ripple effect on other nations. The US government will now increase taxes on its citizens to provide millions of dollars more for abortions in the US, and in other countries. They will also force other nations to accept homosexuality, same sex marriage and the transgender lifestyle as a condition for receiving aid from the US.

The United States has been a nation protected by the hand of God and blessed with a divinely authored Constitution that requires the government to put the freedom of its citizens first. This once God fearing



nation, is now in danger of perishing as those who have come to power are laboring to systematically destroy the Constitution. That same ripple effect will encourage governments everywhere to further squash the liberties of their citizens, push aside lawful measures by edict and do it without the voice of the people.

Sadly, millions of people in the world have lived under harsh conditions for generations. Now the loss of freedom, the economic, emotional and physical hardships those people have known all their lives, has come to those who have never known such suffering. When life suddenly becomes difficult, every day, for those who have never experienced it, one's faith may falter.

The challenge for us, as Latter Day Saints, is how do we respond to such matters. Is this the time to bow down before our enemies and not resist (such as the newly converted Lamanites) or are we to rise up with the "Title of Liberty" and push back the kingmen and the dissenters and reestablish peace in the land (as under Chief Captain Moroni)? These are serious matters of consideration that cannot be simply decided by our passions and human wisdom but require the coordinated prayer and fasting of the Saints for godly wisdom and guidance upon which we are willing to agree and act.

These are not academic questions for us anymore. This is not a day for theories and speculations because the crisis is real, it is imminent and the entire tenor of the world in which we live can change, is changing, rapidly.

These things should not be unexpected. Section 45 describes a time in the last days that every nation and people will be at war and those who are unwilling to lift his sword against his neighbor must flee to Zion. (D&C 45:13a)

The revelation to Enoch warns us: "And the Lord said unto Enoch, As I live, even so will I come in the last days—in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfill the oath which I made unto you, concerning the children of Noah: and the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day, shall the heavens be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; and righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of my Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the

resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out my own elect from the four quarters of the earth unto a place which I shall prepare; a holy city, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem" (D&C 36:12c-g).

There is also, if we will hear it, a prominent theme of patient perseverance by the faithful in the midst of the trial. In the passage above, the Lord promises to come again. It will be in the days of wickedness and vengeance that God will fulfill the oath (covenant) He made to Enoch. This is the everlasting covenant. There are dark and difficult days ahead. Yes, tribulation. But Zion is coming back and the Lord with it. He knows how to preserve His people and He will gather us to the place He will prepare.

Consider the ministry of Enoch and his fathers. In Genesis of the Inspired Version we read: "And this is the genealogy of the sons of Adam, who was the son of God, with whom God himself conversed. And they were preachers of righteousness, and spake and prophesied, and called upon all men everywhere to repent. And faith was taught unto the children of men." (Genesis 6:23-24)

Faith comes by hearing the gospel call to repentance. Nothing short of this can cause a righteous people to come into being. The preaching of repentance calls people to reconsider their thinking and behavior. It presents to them the holiness of God, His justice, His mercy, His goodness and His truthfulness. It lays before them the promise and hope of the kingdom of God and eternal life.

They were preachers of righteousness. Righteousness was the subject matter of their preaching. Jesus Christ is the Lord, our Righteousness. (Jeremiah 23:6) The only way to preach about righteousness is to teach faith on the name of the righteous Lord and repentance of all of our sins.

Later in Genesis we also read this about Enoch: "And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the city of Holiness, even Zion." (Genesis 7:24-25) Note how Enoch preached. His subject was righteousness and the manner of his ministry was righteousness. Enoch preached in righteousness. This becomes our model of ministry. The apostle Paul reminds us that the righteousness of God is



revealed in the gospel. (Romans 1: 16-17) Evidently, when Enoch preached righteousness he declared the gospel.

Enoch's ministry led to the first community on earth called Zion. The ministry which is able to lay down their own agendas, their own wisdom, their own desires and preaching righteousness in righteousness will help to bring about Zion. Everyone who approaches the ministry in another way is fighting against Zion. (see 1 Nephi 3:187-188)

The battle lines are more clearly drawn, and visible, because of the events of last year. In the US there is now a clear line between those who obey law and honor the Constitution and those who honor lawlessness. These are battles not fought with swords and guns but with faith, hope, charity and revelation. It is our turn to be led by God through the wilderness.

We must understand that nothing in this world will be like it was before March 2020. It is not COVID that has changed things, but it is how we have responded and how the enemy has responded that finds us where we are today. Ultimately, we must understand that God, the Lord of Hosts, is moving His mighty hand to stir the nations, to sift the people of the earth and put all things in motion for the purpose of testing and proving all people and fulfilling all of His covenants. Neither the wickedness of the enemy nor our righteousness are driving these events. This is the work of God. Everyone will need to make a choice because there will be no neutral ground as this work of God pushes on.

Many saints and the church in general, have suffered significant wounding of spirit this past year. As a result of the many great tragedies we have experienced, we have learned many things about the needs and desires of our brothers and sisters and we have considered how to address those needs, both temporal and spiritual. The Saints throughout the world need to know these things. We must minister to them and strengthen them or many will be lost in the days to come.

We have also had to face the reality of our general inability as representatives of the Restoration, to bring unity to the greater body of Restoration saints. Such division hinders the ability of all Restorationists to labor for the cause of Zion and may, in the end, exclude us from Zion altogether. Without the unity of brothers and sisters in the Restoration, without being one as the Lord has said, "Be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not

mine" (D&C 38:6a), then "the cause of Zion" is just a catch phrase in our lives and we cannot be a part of bringing it to fruition. We must repent of our division and contention, of rejecting brothers and sisters over disagreements concerning the "points of the law".

"And now I say unto you mine elders, apostles and high priests of my church, Continue ye in the ministry unto which you have been called; and if ye cannot fully agree on all the points of the law, be patient and be not contentious; so far as you can agree work together without heat, confusion, or malice." (D&C 122:16a)

If we cannot follow these instructions from our heavenly Father we will not be there when Zion comes down to meet the saints gathered here in Zion. And as Jesus told Enoch, "Then shall you and all your city meet them there, and will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us, and we will fall upon their necks and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other". (D&C 36:13a)

Do we really want to be there for that glorious reunion? Saints, we must not lose faith, or falter in our mission. We must love one another and not contend with one another. We need each other now, more than ever! There is no time for self-justification. There is no place for making excuses, nor for discouragement or weariness. Today is the day of the Lord's march. Shall we go with Him? God is marching to Zion, are we?

The mission of God's church and God's people has not changed since the beginning of time. God's plan will not be frustrated by man. God has called us to establish the cause of Zion. He says it will be right in the heart of America, and He will gather His people from the four quarters of the earth, and bring them to Zion. The Saints throughout the world need to know this. We must minister to one another and strengthen one another for the coming tribulation, or many will be lost for lack of hope. Our hope remains in Christ. Others will do what they will do. Their unfaithfulness cannot change the truth. Zion, the Second Coming, Eternal Glory are all everlasting truths.

We, Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, are praying for your faithful stand for His truth. We are entering the most exciting days in the history of the world. Everything, every jot and tittle, is moving toward the completion of all of God's promises. Let us embrace one another as we embrace His call to mankind!



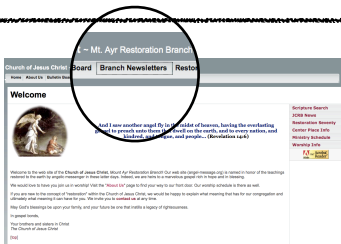
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Upcoming Events

Tentative Preaching Schedule for July

July 4, 2021 - Deacon Joshua Jordison

July 11, 2021 - Priest Joe Mickelson

July 18, 2021 - High Priest Alan Smith

July 25, 2021 - Priest Rodney Bastow

We will be having a congregational potluck on July 18th.

We are still continuing to Zoom our preaching and prayer services. Go to www.gospelrestored.org for the ID numbers and passcodes.

The JCRB General Conference will be held August 8-11 at the Remnant Church in Independence, MO.