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Church of Jesus Christ

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

Mount Ayr Restoration Branch - Ed Anderson, Pastor, 641-223-0480

www.gospelrestored.org

Lamoni Restoration Branch - Joel Loving, Pastor, 816-447-7181

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Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

*Come, ye thankful people come,
Raise the song of harvest home.*

*All is safely gathered in
Ere the winter storms begin;
God, our Maker, doth provide
For our wants to be supplied;
Come to God's own temple, come,
Raise the song of harvest home.*

*All the blessings of the field,
All the stores the gardens yield,
All the fruits in full supply,
Ripened 'neath the summer sky,
All that spring with bounteous hand
Scatters o'er the smiling land,
All that liberal autumn pours
From her rich o'er-flowing stores.*



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— When you arise in the morning give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself. — Tecumseh

— 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. (Psalms 100:4, 5)

— And he who receiveth all things, with thankfulness, shall be made glorious, and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundredfold, yea, more. (D & C 77:4c)



It's Time to Preach Jesus
Elder Tony Crandell
August 15, 2021

Those of you who weren't here the last couple of Sundays missed out on some very good sermons. Rodney's, two weeks ago, and Michael's last Sunday both gave excellent Christ-centered sermons. Ron Smith gave an **excellent** class on the Kingdom of God. I am really pleased now that as a congregation we are focusing on Christ.

Sandra and I just got back from the Lebanon-Get-Together. It's a four-day Southern Gospel Music concert. I really think our church misses out on some of the very joyful and up lifting experiences Sandra and I have had with Southern Gospel music.

Now don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with our music. Some of it is very reverent, some of it is very meditative, and we sing a lot of the standard hymns. What separates Southern Gospel Music from Contemporary Christian, Praise, or the even the classical hymns of the past is that the music is definitely upbeat and joyful and the center piece of the SGM song is very straight forward, a very simplistic Christ-centered message. You can't sit through a concert and not say that it wasn't an uplifting experience.

I am going to have Michael play one of the most popular Southern Gospel songs. It is 100 years old and every group on the road has presented this song one time or another. It just brings out joy to those who sing it. Both to the artists and to the congregation, just watch the faces of the artists as they sing it.

Victory in Jesus

*I heard an old, old story, how a Savior came from glory,
 How He gave His life on Calvary to save a wretch like me;
 I heard about His groaning, of His precious blood's atoning,
 Then I repented of my sins and won the victory.*

*O victory in Jesus, my Savior, forever!
 He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood;
 He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him.
 He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.*

*I heard about His healing, of His cleansing power revealing,
 How He made the lame to walk again and caused the blind to see;*

And then I cried, "Dear Jesus, come and heal my broken spirit,"

*And somehow Jesus came and brought to me the victory.
 (Refrain)*

*I heard about a mansion He has built for me in glory,
 And I heard about the streets of gold beyond the crystal sea;
 About the angels singing and the old redemption story,
 And some sweet day I'll sing up there the song of victory.
 (Refrain)*

Over the years I've heard several people testify that, because of the pointed and specific lyrics of a SGM song or because of an artist's testimony heard on a radio broadcast or

in a concert, they were convicted to the point they turned their lives over to Jesus. What a thrill it would be to hear such a comment. You know, one of the biggest thrills you could ever have is knowing that **you** were personally responsible for someone hearing the Gospel for the first time and then that person coming to a decision to turn to Christ, all because of you. I never knowingly have had that experience where I knew I was the person responsible. They say, you'll never forget the first time it happens to you.

It's the Holy Spirit, of course, who prepares a heart to accept Christ. But our Lord has given us a role in all of this. Otherwise, why would He have told us – by telling His disciples – to go into all the world and be witnesses? (See Mark 16:15.) But for the Lord to use you, you must put yourself in a position where He can do that. And you must be willing. And don't be discouraged if you share the Gospel and don't hear results.

Have you talked to anybody lately about Jesus or what the gospels are all about, or what it means to have faith? If not, why not? **NOW'S THE TIME.** Don't wait. Do it now. You might influence someone to become a Christian! And as we are saying this morning, "this is one of the primary reasons why God put us here".

One Pastor said that on the Saturday before Easter some years ago he walked through the little town where his church was located and hung special "doorhangers" on the doors of a hundred residences. These included Easter tracts, a Gospel of John, a little kit of candy corn and an invitation to church. He didn't personally see any response to that effort. Yet. But it really doesn't matter. Isaiah 55:11 tells us what God says: *So shall My word be that goes forth from my mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

I met a person at a Blackwood Brothers Quartet concert a few years ago who is a barber in Ames, Iowa, in Campus town. He bought an offset printing press and prints Christian tracts in the basement of his barber shop when he is not busy cutting hair. He, knowing that Sandra and I travel to a lot of SGM singings, has given me literally thousands of these tracts to leave at the various locations. Well, due to COVID, most large events have been cancelled, or I have already saturated those locations with tracts. So now I am drowning in these tracts. Thank goodness, his attendance at Blackwood Brothers Quartet events has also dwindled due to COVID.

It's a lot like this time of year in Lamoni when you must lock your car any time you get out of it. If not, since the zucchini are ripe, someone will put a sack of them in your car. Well, if I don't lock my car at a Blackwood Brothers Quartet concert, Raymond will put another box of 1500 tracts in it. In the past, you probably have seen these tracts laying on the table in the back. They are straight forward non-denominational King James oriented scriptures. King James because most people have access to a KJV bible.

How many times do you pull up at a stop sign to see what appears to be a very healthy man "panhandling"? He is surrounded by help wanted signs he would see if would just turnaround. At the east ramp of Hickman and I-35, a gentleman there has set up a lawn chair and has hidden his



expensive mountain bike in the weeds and works that corner daily panhandling during the rush hours. There is a new wrinkle in panhandling now and that is to have a group of folks all with orange traffic vests standing in the middle of the intersections holding 5 gallon buckets appearing to represent some national fund raising drive. In reality, they are only a group of pan handlers trying to make you think they are legit. If you wait a while, you will see the Police run them off.

How do you handle pan handlers? Do you contribute? Do you just look ahead as if you never saw him? Do you execute “righteous” judgement and say he/they are just working at his/their job as a “professional panhandler” and I am not going to encourage or enable them?

The Book of Mormon tells us that we are all beggars; that maybe we shouldn’t question the motive. If we do, we have to execute righteous judgement to ascertain that he is truly a “beggar in need” or an imposter just working at his job as a “professional” panhandler. I have never really been able to be at peace in my mind making that judgement. I generally become one of those “stiff necked” people we read about and stare straight ahead and drive off. On the other hand, when Roger Potts was working for me he stopped every time and gave them \$5.00.

Starting today I have a new idea. I am folding a \$5 bill up inside one of these tracts and when I see a panhandler on the corner, I am going to give him the tract so that he must really work to unfold it to get the money out. The money must be visible, but he has to work at it a little bit. Just maybe, just maybe, he’ll keep the tract and look up one of the scriptures in a Bible.

I have no idea yet if this will be effective in witnessing to anyone. What this means is that if you faithfully do your part, it’s up to God to get the results He desires. We must believe that if we put His word out there, if we tell others about Christ, God will use it to touch lives.

What happens when you do nothing? Nothing. What happens when you do something? Maybe nothing. But maybe something!

A woman once told the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody she didn’t like his method of evangelism. He surprised her by admitting he didn’t like his style much either. “What’s your system?” he asked. The woman said, “Well, I really don’t have one.” “Well then,” Moody replied, “I like mine much better than yours.”

Reliable surveys of Christians over the years have consistently found that the number of professing Christians who introduce others to Christ is very small, usually around just two percent! We all tend to forget the Great Commission. Do we think it just applies to someone else?

Although much of our attention is on and in the church, the real mission field is outside the church walls. The real mission field is where we are every day. One study found that 92 percent of Jesus’ contacts with ordinary people were out in the mainstream of life, not in the temple or synagogues. In John 14:15, Christ told His disciples, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Later, Peter told Cornelius that Christ had “commanded us to testify, that through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.” (Acts 10:42-43.) And that “command” –

found in the Great Commission – still applies to us today as believers. Do we love Him enough to keep His commandment to be a witness? The Lord’s command, “go into all the world,” begins right where you are. Your testimony is no good to anyone if you keep it to yourself. Tell someone!

What if no one had ever bothered to tell you? What if my Dad had just left me alone to do my own thing? Without his witness, leadership, or instruction from him, what are the chances that I would have just naturally, picked up on the need to search out the Gospel or Christ? Fat Chance!

It’s more than just being led to a church door....it’s about learning about Christ.

I say again... What if no one had ever bothered to tell you? In Acts 10:42 Christ commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. He commanded us to preach and spread the Gospel. We don’t have any choice in this matter. It’s called the Great Commission! Go into all the world and make disciples! 2nd Timothy 4:2: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

Many years ago, in the late 50’s, the RLDS church was promoting the idea of “each one, win one.” It’s the idea that each member should win just one person to Christ. Wouldn’t it be amazing if every Restoration member in the world would do this? Wouldn’t it be amazing if every Christian in this world would do this? I have read that worldwide the people who claim to be Christians number 2.1 billion and our world population is 6.8 billion. If every Christian won just one person to Christ, there would be 4.2 billion Christians in this world! AMAZING!

That would be fantastic, and wouldn’t God be pleased?! And just think, there are probably some Christians who would win more than one person to Christ.

But sad to say, that probably won’t happen, because most of us will never win one person to Christ in our entire lifetime. THINK ABOUT IT.

We need to begin thinking about the person or persons whom you could win to Christ and start praying for them. Then look for opportunities to witness to them.

Acts 20:20 says, *You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.* It’s the idea of don’t hide the gospel from people. Be out in the open about it. Talk about Jesus publicly and in every home.

We all need to preach Jesus individually or one on one and as much as possible. We have heard Jim Major’s testimony that It is now the time to do this. The time is now!

Tis the season to preach Jesus anywhere, everywhere and to all people!

But Tony, what can one person do? The task is so big. As you know I am always interested in Dwight Moody stories, having worked at a Moody Bible radio station. Dwight Lyman Moody (February 5, 1837 - December 22, 1899). He was more commonly known as D. L. Moody and what a preacher he must have been! I don’t know if he did much preaching on street corners in Chicago but he could sure draw a crowd in the later 1800’s. His first city-wide



crusade in America was in Brooklyn beginning October 31, 1875, at the Clermont Avenue Rink, seating 7,000. Only non-church members could get admission tickets as 12,000 to 20,000 crowds were turned away. Over 2,000 converts resulted.

Next came Philadelphia starting on November 21 with nightly crowds of 12,000. The Philadelphia crusade was held at the unused Pennsylvania freight depot which John Wanamaker had purchased. It was located at Tenth and Market. His ushers were very well trained, capable of seating 1,000 people per minute, and vacating the premises of some 13,000 in 4 minutes if needed. The doors were opened one and a half hours early and in 10 minutes the 12,000 seats were taken. On January 19, 1876 President Grant and some of his cabinet attended. Total attendance was 1,050,000 with 4,000 decisions for Christ.

WOW!

Today, if you have a revival meeting in a church you will hardly get a crowd. I hate to say it, but, in some ways, most of the time you can't get your own church members to attend, let alone non-Christians. People just are not interested in the gospel. And they have too many irons in the fire. They are too busy. I've always said and believe it; that we are often too busy for our own spiritual good! True for saints and sinners alike!

Preacher Billy Sunday was born in Nevada, Iowa. He said back in the early 30's "*Many churches report no new members on confession of faith. Why these meager results with this tremendous expenditure of energy and money? Why are so few people coming into the Kingdom? I will tell you—there is not a definite effort put forth to persuade a definite person to receive a definite Savior at a definite time, and that definite time is now.*" What did Jim Major testify?**the time is now!**

If there is no effort put forth to preach Jesus or witness publicly then there will no people coming to Christ and being saved. AND BEING SAVED IS WHAT GOD WANTS PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE. He has commanded us to teach. We don't have any choice in this matter. It's called the Great commission! Go into all the world and make disciples!

Again 2nd Timothy 4:2: *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*

It's the time to preach Jesus anywhere, everywhere and to all people!

***Who is Jesus?
Elder Michael Jordison
August 8, 2021***

I'd like to read a poem to you that you might have heard before. It goes like this.

The Touch of the Master's Hand

Tw'as battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while to waste much time on the old violin, but held it up with a smile;

"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried. "Who'll start the bidding for me?" "A dollar, a dollar;" then two!"

"Only two? Two dollars, and who'll make it three: Three dollars, once; three dollars twice; going for three."

But no, from the room, far back, a gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow; Then, wiping the dust from the old violin, and tightening the loose strings, he played a melody pure and sweet as caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low, said; "What am I bid for the old violin? And he held it up with the bow.

A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two? Two thousand! And who'll make it three? Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice, and going and gone," said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried, "We do not quite understand what changed its worth." Swift came the reply: "The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune and battered and scarred with sin, Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd, much like the old violin, A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine; a game - and he travels on. "He is going "once, and going twice, He's going and almost gone."

But the Master comes and the foolish crowd never can quite understand the worth of a soul and the change that's wrought by the touch of the Master's hand.

As I prepare to speak sometimes I just start with a blank notepad and start writing things. As I thought about this morning and what I was going to say knowing I was going to have the concert the night before and have had many other things going on this past week, I started out with that notepad. It wasn't filling up so I just wrote Who is Jesus? Who is this Jesus that we talk about? As I wrote that down I looked at that and thought of that poem that I read to you, The Touch of the Master's Hand. That's kind of what I want to share about this morning. I don't know that I can tell you really everything about Jesus. I can't really describe Him in full detail that I would like or that He deserves but I am going to try to maybe open something up in your mind to think about this morning.

If you had to describe Jesus to somebody that had never met Him, how do you suppose you would do it? That's kind of where my mind was circling. How do I explain Jesus? If I had a friend who was coming in at the airport and I couldn't pick my friend up and had to send somebody else who had never met my friend, how would I explain to this person what my friend looked like? He's short or tall or he's whatever. He's wearing this and that. I thought about how I would describe myself. Well, I'm kind of short. I have short brown hair that is starting to get gray. I have big ears, a pointy nose. I have scars on my face. I have scars actually all over my body. In fact, the left side of my body is filled with scars so there must be something wrong here because the left side is the part that I always damage.

In describing Jesus what would I say? How would I describe Him? There aren't any pictures of Jesus. What does He look like? Can you tell me? Does He have red hair or brown hair? Is it long, is it short? What kind of sandals does He wear? Do they come up over the ankle or are they down low? What kind of garment does He wear? I didn't take pictures. As far as I know there aren't any portraits painted of



Him necessarily. We don't know so how are you going to describe Jesus?

I have had dreams where I have seen Jesus and I've heard of other experiences of people that have seen Jesus. As near as I can tell they do not all agree. In some cases He has light skin. In some cases He has olive skin. I think it is just based on your perception at the time. When I saw Him in my dream I can't tell you exactly how He looked. I can't really describe Him. The only thing I can tell you that I remember is the way He looked at me, His gaze. That's what impacted me the most. I guess the way He looks maybe isn't all that important and that's why it's not in the scriptures. We are not to focus on that.

I brought a prop today and Josh you are not allowed to participate in this discussion. He knows what I am going to do. I brought this prop. Can you see what this is? It's a pencil. In his writings the Jewish author and scholar Jeff Benner shares this example and that's what I want to share with you. How would you describe this pencil? It's yellow, it's straight, thin, it's got rubber at one end and it's pointy at the other end. According to Jeff Benner in his analogy the Jewish authors that we have that wrote in our Bible described things not by what they looked like but what their purpose was. What were they used for? So if we were going to describe this pencil in that context how would we describe it? It's something that you write with. That's how we would describe that. If you closed your eyes and I described this to you by what it looks like. It's long. It's slender and has rubber on one end and pointy on the other end. What would you think I was talking about? Now probably you would be thinking a pencil because that's what we have been talking about. Maybe in your mind when I say long and slender and pointy with rubber on the end you would be thinking of a walking cane. It's long and slender and has rubber or maybe you are thinking of one of those Nerf darts. They are long and slender and have a little rubber on the end so they don't damage anything when they hit something. But if you closed your eyes and I said, 'OK what am I holding? I am holding a writing instrument that I could write with and erase.' You would say it's a pencil so we're describing things according to their purpose not necessarily by what they look like. So if we're going to talk about Jesus and we're going to describe Him then maybe we need to describe what His purpose was or something more than along the lines of what He looked like.

Now as I thought about this, when we describe things we look at it in different ways. One is obviously by what it looks like: red hair, brown hair, blue eyes, big ears. Sometimes we describe what things or people do. My Dad was a mailman. He was a carpenter, a bricklayer and did things like that. We can describe their relationship to us so I have a father and he's my father or she's my sister or my second cousin three times removed. Or, we could describe their character or the characteristics that they exhibit externally. Are they sweet? Are they kind? Would they give you the shirt off their back? Are they mean? Don't go near that person because they'll eat you up. Don't mess around with Jim. Right?

Now there are numerous references that we find in our scriptures. As near as I can tell there are at least a

thousand different references to God specifically in the Bible alone and in all of these we never get a picture of what Jesus or God looks like. They are never really described but when He's described it's in a way that gives us insight to His nature, gives us insight into His character. What does God do? What does Jesus do? Well, we know Jesus from the most common names that we call Him. We call Him Savior. We call Him the Son of God. We call Him Emmanuel, God with us. We call Him Joshua, the Lord's salvation and Christ the Messiah.

I looked at a couple of other references of those thousands and I just want to share a few of them with you this morning. He's referred to as:

- 1) the mighty one, strong and mighty
- 2) the Holy One of Israel
- 3) the Lord God of Hosts
- 4) our advocate
- 5) the chief cornerstone
- 6) the Almighty
- 7) the Ancient of Days
- 8) Alpha and Omega
- 9) the beginning and the end
- 10) the Branch
- 11) the bread of life
- 12) consuming fire
- 13) the lamb of God
- 14) the Deliverer
- 15) fountain of all righteousness
- 16) the rock of ages
- 17) the I AM
- 18) Creator
- 19) daystar
- 20) He who became sin
- 21) the healer
- 22) the resurrection
- 23) the way, the truth and the light
- 24) the Son of God

You get the idea. He is just described in a whole bunch of different ways.

So from these, we don't get an idea of what He looks like on the outside but we get an idea of who He is on the inside, His character. I think we learn that God isn't interested in how things appear but rather in the reality of what they are and He's looking for that in us. Our reality isn't based on our perception but our reality should be based on our experience.

If I were to ask you to describe the Queen of England. Could you do that and how well could you do that? Some of us could probably do it better than others. All I can tell you is she's an elderly lady with white hair and wears hats. That's what I know about the Queen of England. But if I were to ask you to describe your mother, could you give me some more detail? Some of us could or somebody that is close to you. Why is that? Why do you give so much more detail about your mother versus somebody that is far removed from you? It's because of your relationship, your association with them. The Queen of England never cared for me. She never changed my diaper. I can attest to that. Well, I'm pretty sure. I wouldn't know if she did but it's because of our experience with these people. That's how well we can



describe them. So how you would describe Jesus is a great deal based on your experience with Him.

Arthur Oakman once asked the question. He said, 'Do you know Jesus or do you know something about Him?' Do you know Jesus or do you know something about Him? I think what he was trying to get at here is do you have a living relationship with Him in a way that lets you know His character or do you just know stories about Him, things that you have heard about Him. Has your experience become personal or is it in the third person?

That relationship with Christ is what we call our testimony or it should be. I know in this church in particular we are very interested in the history of the church. We are very interested in the scriptures, the Book of Mormon. We talk about priesthood. We talk about ordinances and principles of the gospel. We talk about a lot of things and many times when we are asked to share our testimony those things are kind of what come to our mind. Reality is that is not important. Scriptures are important. The Book of Mormon is important. All of that is important. That's not what I am saying but the real important thing here is your relationship with Christ and how He has touched you, your experience with Christ.

If we look at the scriptures Mormon wrote as he was writing in the Book of Mormon, 'Jesus Christ is made manifest in the things which we write.' All of what we have in the scriptures are there to point to Jesus. They are not to supersede Him or to take His place. Nephi said, 'We write of Christ. We speak of Christ. We prophesy of Christ. We teach of Christ.' Why? 'That our children may know to whom the source is that they may find a remission of their sins.' That's the importance of all these things that we have that we may look to the one who can remit. Who can save us, redeem us.

Several years ago a friend of mine had an experience and the Lord came to Him. There was another man whom he was acquainted with that was living in sin. He was in a relationship that he shouldn't have been in. The Lord told my friend, 'You need to go to this man and you need to call him out and call him to repentance and share with him. So my friend not really knowing the best way to do that procrastinated and he waited and finally the Lord had to come back a second time to say, 'Hey, you know this man and you need to talk to him.' My friend procrastinated again. He wasn't sure how to approach him, what to say, what to do. And so the Lord had to come a third time. The third time he came to him in a dream and in this dream my friend said he came to a room that was like a hospital room and some of the family was around a bed and at the bed he saw his daughter. She was hooked up to some machines and he could hear her breathing. Now my friend is very well acquainted with people on hospice and people about to die so he could tell that she was near the end of her life. As he listened to her labored breathing he kind of heard that last final sigh and he was frantic. He knew there wasn't anything he could do. As he turned and looked back down at the bed he noticed that his daughter was no longer there and it was now this man whom he had been asked to go speak to. He looked down at him and felt the presence of the Lord. So he looked up and looked over and the Lord was standing there looking at him with probably rather piercing eyes. With a stern voice He

said, 'This man is my child too and I love him just as you love your daughter. Now go and do what I have commanded you to do and speak to this man.' Needless to say he didn't need a fourth command from the Lord to do that.

Who is Jesus? Well, at that moment, at least to my friend, He was like a schoolteacher who was scolding a student for not doing their work. To the man that was in sin, Jesus was the good shepherd who had left the ninety-nine to go after the one. To some of us Jesus is the great physician. He's the healer who sustains us and lifts us up. To others, He's the comforter who provides that strength that we need when we're going through very difficult circumstances, trials, sufferings, not healed. To each of us Jesus is something a little bit different and that's based on our experience with Him and how He chooses to touch us and to relate to us.

So from the poem that I read, The Touch of the Master's Hand we find that it's often things that are found to have no worth that are really things of great value. It's because of the testimony by virtue of an experience with the Master that they are now seen with great value. It's like the old violin. It didn't change. The old man picked it up and played it. It didn't change before or after but all of a sudden because of that testimony, that relationship, that experience that violin was seen for the worth and the value that it had.

Ron, I know your Father had a similar experience and your Mom titled an article after that where he saw a lump of coal which represented a man, I think, rough around the edges but with the touch of the Christ that lump of coal was transformed into a diamond. Now I suppose you could say that it was transformed and changed but the chemicals in that coal didn't change. All of a sudden because of that experience with the Master those chemicals were seen in a different way.

Jesus wants to touch us at our very center. Most of us have heard the story in the Book of Mormon where the Brother of Jared went to the Lord and said, 'We're going to cross the waters in darkness. What should we do?' The Lord said, 'I don't know. You tell me.' So he gets these sixteen stones and he lays them out there and says, 'Lord, touch them and if you do they're going to provide light.' So what happens? It's a pretty neat experience. You need to go back and read that in Ether but the Lord touches each stone and as he touches them, the stones didn't change but their testimony did and they began to radiate that light. It came from within out of them.

Who is Jesus? Well, Jesus is the God of the Universe who is pursuing me. He's also pursuing you. Now I've shared this testimony before so I won't share it in detail but I was living a life of sin. I was raised up in the church. I was taught the scriptures many times but I chose not to follow them. I was newly married and starting a family and the Lord called me out. He sent an angel from His presence to call me to repentance and say, 'Michael, you need to get back to church.' Now it wasn't that He wanted me in this type of a setting. He wanted me in a place where I would have an experience with Him, not just for me but for my family. Had I not heeded that call many of you wouldn't know me today. You wouldn't know my children most likely. We wouldn't be here but He loved me enough to send an angel in a way that



would cause me to want to investigate who He is. WOW! Who is this who would send somebody to me specifically.

I have been touched many times by Jesus and they are not all pleasant. The Holy Ghost is here to convict us of our sin. That's one of the things that it does. Some of those experiences haven't been pleasant for me. I'll be honest but in all of those experiences, whether I would choose to call them pleasant or not so pleasant, I understand what His intent is, what His goal has been and that's to draw me into a relationship where I can experience who He is in all of the different facets that are possible out there. He wants to make me more like Him.

Many of you know from the testimony of Mosiah about a man named Noah. Noah was a king over part of the Nephite people. He was a very, very wicked king and was surrounded by wicked advisers and a council of priests that were with him. The Lord sent a prophet named Abinadi to come and speak with him. Abinadi testified of their sins, Noah and his wicked council and the people. He testified of the One who had sent him, of God, and explained to him who God was. All of them rejected Abinadi's words except for one man, Alma. The rest of them put Abinadi to death. They killed him because of what he said but Alma who had listened to the words became convicted. He was touched by the testimonies that Abinadi had given and something sank deep in his heart and he sought a relationship with that God who had been testified of. As that relationship grew he began to then shine the light out to the people and to those that would listen he shared about the God of Israel, the Messiah and the church was born in those people.

As we read from the scriptures, Jesus seems to be many things. He's a healer. He's a shepherd. He's a Lord. He's a prince of peace so on and so forth. According to the testimony that we find of Abinadi, Jesus wants to reveal Himself to us in order that He may touch us and He may change us by the power of the Holy Ghost. We can learn about Jesus but the real goal is for us to experience Him by allowing Him to inhabit our lives. The idea here is so that we can know Him just as well as He knows us. Do you know Jesus as well as He knows you? No, but He wants us to. He wants to reveal Himself.

Jesus stood before Pilate and Pilate asked Him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' In the testimony of Mark, Jesus replies, 'Thou hast said well. I am.' When Jesus said that the Jews had a fit. What! Here this man is proclaiming Himself to be equal with God. How could He say that He was king of the Jews? Where does that come from? That goes back a long time ago. You remember a man named Moses who led the children of Israel across the dry land and the Red Sea. Before Moses did that he was living in Egypt and he had to leave pretty quickly or else he was going to be in trouble with the Pharaoh, the King so he went and settled in the land of Midian and there he got married.

As he was out tending the flocks in the desert one day near the Mountain Horeb, he saw this fire on the side of the mountain and as he got closer he noticed that it was this bush that was burning. The more he studied it the more he realized that as it was burning it was not burning up. It was just on fire perpetually burning. As he realized that he heard this voice that said, 'Moses, Moses, take off your shoes for

the place you are standing on is holy ground.' Here we have the Lord sharing with Moses in the expression of a burning bush so the Lord tells Moses, 'I'm going to send you back to Egypt and you are going to go to Pharaoh and you are going to ask him to let the Israelites go and you are going to tell the Israelites that's why you are there.'"

As Moses is listening to the Lord he's thinking, 'Yeah, right, sure. I don't think I can do that.' The Lord says, 'No, you are going to go.' Moses says, 'Well, OK who do I say has sent me?' And the Lord speaks out of the bush, 'I AM that I AM. Tell the people that I AM has sent you.' So here we had Jesus before Pilate declaring Himself to be equal with God, Jesus as the I AM, the same God that revealed Himself to Moses.

Going back a little bit further in the story, so to speak, to the beginning where Adam and Eve are in the garden we know what happened. They transgressed. The Lord kicked them out of the Garden and while they were there they were, of course, partaking of the fruit from the Tree of Life so as they are outside of the Garden, how are they going to partake of the Tree of Life? They have to go back into the Garden. That's easy to do. When I was a kid we used to climb the neighbor's fence and go over and pick their apples. So what did the Lord do. It says that He placed a cherub in the east of the Garden with a flaming sword to keep the way of the Tree of Life. Now, Adam and Eve as they are outside of the Garden want to go back to get the fruit but what are they going to do? They have to go past that cherub and that flaming sword. Samuel has a sword and that thing is pretty sharp. I don't think I want to get anywhere near a sword and if it's on fire I really don't want to go near it. Something might shoot out of it. Well, that burning bush was Jesus Christ and that flaming sword is Jesus Christ.

Now, Ron in our class on the Kingdom this morning was talking about baptism and he was saying that you have to be born of water. John the Baptist said, 'I baptize you with water but there is one who is coming who will baptize you with fire and the Holy Ghost.' If we want to get to the Tree of Life we have to pass through that fire. That sword has to run us through and we have to die. Now if we want to be touched by the fire and we want to be touched by Jesus Christ then we're going to have to give up something. We're going to have to sacrifice. Just as Jesus touched those sixteen stones and something changed within them and allowed them to produce light, when Jesus touches us part of His nature has to be given to us and placed within us. His nature is a nature of sacrifice. If we are living our lives and there's no sacrifice in our lives for the Kingdom, we have not experienced Jesus Christ or we are not testifying of it.

That's what He wants to do. He wants to touch each of us in a way that we can experience Him and through that experience we can then share that with others. Our testimony is not going to be vibrant unless we can testify of Jesus Christ and how He has changed us, how He has impacted us. We can talk about the church all we want but that's not really going to do it. That's not the important thing.

So who is Jesus? Solomon said, *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to search out a matter.* (Proverbs 25:2) God wants to touch us and He wants to reveal something. He wants us to search it out. He wants



us to experience Him. I can't tell you about Jesus in that way. I can tell you about my experience with Jesus but really you need to have your own experience with Him. Through that experience you need to share that with others.

What was it that Abinadi shared with Alma and Noah and his brothers? This is my testimony of how Jesus has revealed Himself as well. This comes from the 8th chapter of Mosiah starting in verse 28. *And now Abinadi said unto them, I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people; And because he dwelleth in flesh, he shall be called the Son of God: And having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son; the Father because he was conceived by the power of God: and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son: And they are one God, yea, the very eternal Father of heaven and of earth; And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people. And after all this, and after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father; And thus God breaketh the bands of death; having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men: Having ascended into heaven; having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion toward the children of men; Standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions; having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.* (28-37)

That's Jesus. That's what He wants to do for each of us and we need to experience that for ourselves. We need to understand that in a way that can transform us and change our lives. That's the important thing. So I hope that if you don't have a testimony of who Jesus is that you will seek it and seek it quickly.

Enlisting in His Army ***Apostle Patrick McKay*** ***October 10, 2021***

Good morning, I would like to turn your attention to the book of Moroni, the last chapter, the 29th verse: *Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the*

remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot. (Moroni 10:29-30)

May the Holy Spirit, confirm, validate and authenticate within each of you the authenticity of that word of God, that it might be delicious to you, it might change you and transform you this day and carry you into heavenly places in my prayer.

Gladys Dunn was in a new town, and she decided to go to church. She went to a big church. It had a beautiful choir, there were flowers and a large congregation, and she sat there. She enjoyed being there. She enjoyed the music, and then she heard the sermon. The minister wasn't very dynamic. He went on, and on, and on, and on. She looked around and saw many people dozing off. Finally he was finished. She stood up and extended her hand to the older gentleman next to her who had been nodding, and said, "I am Gladys Dunn." And he said, "Me, too." I do not know what will happen today. But you may say, I am glad it is done.

You know we are holding on. I have had the privilege to be in many places in the church and your congregation is not dissimilar from the others. Good people, Latter Day Saints, committed, strong families, and good desires. And yet, everywhere I go, the saints are just holding on. They are just holding on. We are not making much progress collectively. It does not mean we are not praying or that we are not studying or that we are not attending church, or that we are not overcoming obstacles in our life, but collectively as a people, we are just holding on, we are waiting. I am not sure what we are waiting for but we are good at it. We are good at waiting.

You know the foundation of this latter day evangel was birthed with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. What is so important about this book? Why is it referred to as containing the fullness of the everlasting gospel? What key elements are necessary for it to make a particular witness of Jesus Christ in our lives? Why did Joseph's angelic courier tell him that "the words of this book would tingle in the ears of those who heard and cause their hearts to rejoice, and they would ask the way to Zion"? How would you answer these questions this morning, dear saints? Do you believe the emergence of the Book of Mormon ushered in a new dispensation? That it created a conduit between heaven and earth? Do you believe this book is the engine designed by God to complete the latter day work and push this forward into the kingdom of God? Can you testify that it came forth by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, and that it is designed by God to be a part of the divine destiny of all those who name the name of Jesus?

The Book of Mormon's message is so very, very attractive, but have you ever asked yourself, "Why"? If you have seen Mormon missionaries—I do not know if you have Mormons in this town—but they have a little missionary book called The Book of Mormon: Another Witness of Jesus Christ. I used to teach the *Go Ye and Teach* slide series. Some of you have seen that and have used it, and we believe in what is taught in there, but it is not until lesson six that we begin sharing the Book of Mormon. Interesting, isn't it? Why we are the New Testament church we tell people. We believe in apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers. We believe in the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long



suffering, gentleness. We believe in all the gifts. We are the New Testament Church. But I want to tell you this morning that I do not believe we are the New Testament church. I believe we are the Book of Mormon Church, and I trust by the end of this hour that you might agree with me, at least that you might consider what I am saying. I believe this book is special because, with exceptional clarity and powerful imagery, it points men to Jesus Christ. The stories, the prophecies, and the men who wrote them are both exciting and instructive in pointing men to Jesus Christ. And yet it is not our primary emphasis when we tell the story and I think that is the reason why we are holding on—why we are keeping pace, but not really going anywhere.

God made a covenant with the house of Israel. You know the old expression, *There are many plain and precious things taken away by the great and abominable church, and also many of the covenants of the Lord.* [e.g. 3 Nephi 3:168-169]

You know, King Benjamin instructs us that *when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God.* (Mosiah 1:49)

Lehi reminds us of the fortunate fall: *Adam fell, that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.* (2 Nephi 1:115); setting the stage for Jesus' substitutionary death that He would die for you, and for me. He died for everyone, but He died specifically for me, Patrick. If I were the only person in the world, He still would have come to the cross and died for me. Each of you needs to look at the atonement and death and resurrection of Jesus, as if that was done for you personally, because you know what? It was.

Alma discusses personal faith, and he compares the Word of God to a seed. And if it is a good seed, he says, if you plant it and nurture it, it will swell within you and grow, and you will know it is a good seed. And you will have a perfect knowledge of that thing that you exercised your faith in. (Alma 16:152-158) The Book of Mormon goes on to say you cannot only know the truth of the Book of Mormon, by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, but *you can know the truth of all things.* (Moroni 10:5). How many of you would like to know some things? Well, here is the elixir. You can know the truth of all things. I did not know that when I was at Graceland and that is why I did not go into the math department, because I did not know that. I knew I did not know anything, and I knew if I went in there, I would know less than when I started so I stayed away from there.

Nephi says in spite of the tumult and division that separated his family, that caused civil war and death. Yet Nephi says, he lived after the manner of happiness, because he had faith 600 years before Jesus came, that He would come in the flesh and redeem His people. (2 Nephi 4:43)

Mormon explains that *all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law.* (Moroni 8:25) Remarkable, isn't it? All will come alive in Christ. You know that is because those who die without the law, where there is no law, there is no condemnation. And the scripture says they come forth in the first resurrection and it is tolerable for them, because they are able to be taught.

You know the Book of Mormon is filled with personal revelation, as well as revelation to the nation and to the church. We believe that God speaks today. In fact, I

have actually heard His voice and I believe that some of you have heard His voice. Brother Sherman comes to church with the express purpose of hearing the voice of God, and the voice of God has the power to change us, to transform us, and recreate His image in us.

Yes, the Book of Mormon is attractive. It is filled with so many spiritual gems. But I want to elucidate for you what I believe is the most powerful principle in the Book of Mormon. If you were in the class, then you know where I am going to go with this, at least in part, but it is a concept so profound, so dynamic, so powerful, that it can change our lives. It can change the landscape of the church, as well as the world and we no longer have to be in a holding pattern. We no longer have to remain as the people that are just hanging on.

You know, I have done a lot of missionary work in this country and in other places, but everywhere I go, in the United States, it is the same. We are barely hanging on. We are dwindling in unbelief, not because we do not believe, but we do not believe enough. King Benjamin says, *if you believe all these things, see that you do them.* (Mosiah 2:17) What's holding us back as a people? Why do we not see the promises manifest in our lives as a people, collectively. Why is it so difficult for us to grow the church today? In the Kansas City area where we live, we see evangelical churches popping up, and they are good sized. We saw four at least in Lee's Summit, brand new churches within just a few miles of each other. These are what you call mega churches, and they are growing. But we are not growing. We have the fullness of the gospel, and yet they are growing. Something is not right. We are not doing something right, and I want to suggest to you this morning, at least in part, that we have an answer.

You know when Moroni challenged us with his last appeal that I read to you, concluding the Book of Mormon, this was his epilogue. An epilogue is the last thing an author says when he publishes a book. It is the final coupe de grâce. He gathers up everything he wants you to know and in the concluding pronouncement of his writing, he gives his final thoughts—those that he believed are most important. *Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is His grace sufficient for you, that by His grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God.* (Moroni 10: 29) Moroni implores us to come to Christ and be perfected in Him! He is not telling us to be perfected in ourselves. Do you remember reading the testimony of Nephi: *I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them.* (1 Nephi 1: 65)

Jesus commanded us to be perfect. *I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.* (3 Nephi 5:92) So do you know anyone who is perfect? If not, why not? Do you believe His grace is sufficient for you? He promises that by His grace, we may be made perfect in Christ. Nephi wrote: *For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to*



believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do. (2 Nephi 11:43-44)

Dear Saints, are you saved? Are you reconciled to God? Are you redeemed? Nephi declared: *I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell. (2 Nephi 15:7)* Nephi did not write that he had a hope that he would be redeemed. He says I am redeemed. I am saved. Consider this: *And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father, I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works. And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name, [in other words reconciled] shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father, at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. (3 Nephi 12:28-29)*

Do you believe that you are guiltless before the Father? Or do you believe you will be guiltless at that day? Or do you believe you are guiltless now? What if today is your last day? What if you only have a few hours to live? Maybe you have many years to live. What is your estate right now in the kingdom of God? Do you know to be guiltless is to be perfect in Christ? Now if He says He will hold us guiltless that does not mean we did not do something wrong. It just means He is not going to hold us guilty. Okay? How many of you have ever broken the law? Do not raise your hands. Whether it is a law of man or a law of God, I know you all have. I know it is natural for men and women to sin. It is our nature and yet we have this conundrum. We have this natural tendency to be at enmity with God, and yet we are commanded to be perfect even as our Father and Christ in heaven are perfect.

How many of you are sanctified? A lot of times we use the word sanctified as a synonym for being righteous or being perfect. *Now this is the commandment, Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day. (3 Nephi 12:33)*

Spotless or guiltless. Now, if you have obeyed the gospel—if you have been baptized and you have been a recipient of the gift of the Holy Ghost—guess what? You are sanctified. How many of you know who Michelangelo was? The great sculptor. He would take a piece of marble—he selected that marble—and then he took a chisel and a hammer, I suppose, and in his mind's eye he saw something that he wanted to create. He began chiseling away at that marble until, at some time, what he had envisioned in his mind became a reality. When you and I obeyed the gospel, entered the waters of baptism, received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we were sanctified. We were set apart just like that piece of marble, and just like Michelangelo began recreating the image in his mind's eye, God through the power of the Holy Spirit is now recreating His image in us. We are sanctified because we have obeyed the gospel, and He promises that He holds us guiltless, or that we are without spot. *And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood*

of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot. (Moroni 10:30)

We have to take the promises of the future and bring them into the present. We have to claim the promises as God's people. We are His people because we have named His name. We have entered the waters of baptism. We have received the gift of the Holy Ghost. We have been sanctified. We have been commissioned, and now we are being empowered to be His witnesses, and inasmuch as we testify of Him, the promise is that the same power that causes a man to bear witness opens the hearts and ears of those who hear and causes them to believe as many as will.

What is this power to be without spot or be held guiltless? The power to remit sin is sown within the fabric of the latter day message. You know in Protestantism they resisted the papacy. They remonstrated, or they protested; therefore they were called Protestants. In Catholicism, they have this intercessory priesthood that God would speak through them. The Pope was considered inerrant. He spoke as the Vicar of Christ and whatever he said was law—was the gospel. The Protestants rejected that, so they replaced the papacy with the Bible, and the Bible became the inerrant Word of God. They created a priesthood of believers instead of ecclesiastical offices. Protestant churches may have pastors and shepherds and apostles and teachers and elders, but they have no more authority than the membership. In Catholicism, you have a priesthood with authority. In the Restoration, we have married both of those. We believe in an intercessory priesthood: that God can speak to men and men can speak to the people. In as much as they are in Christ, they can deliver Christ's words. We also believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, insofar as it is translated correctly.

Do you know how many versions of the Bible we have? If it is the inerrant Word of God, why do we have so many translations? We believe the Bible is the word of God insofar as it is translated correctly and it is sufficient for Salvation, but there are mistakes in the Bible. Anything men touch, there can be flaws in it. The Bible says, *No man hath seen God at any time. (John 1:18 King James Version)*, and yet Moses Aaron, Nadab, and 70 of the elders of Israel saw God face to face. (Exodus 24:8-9). That is a mistranslation. The Inspired Version says, *And no man hath seen God at any time, except he hath borne record of the Son.* And so we understand through revelation and prophecy—God speaking through Joseph, writing that down, giving that to us—gives us a fuller revelation of the Word of God. We are perfect in Christ, and that is the angel message. This should cause us to walk in power. Listen to what the Apostle Paul says: *We preach warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 1:28)*

We men of the ministry, that is our job. We are to labor diligently that we can present all men perfect in Christ. That is why we preach, we baptize, we give the gift of the Holy Ghost through the name of Christ, and these people become perfect in Christ, and if they endure to the end, the scripture says, they are held guiltless at the last day. They are spotless before the Lord. Being perfect in Christ does not mean you won't ever sin but what it means is you are held



guiltless. Now you have power in your life. Now you have strength. So this is our calling: *Whosoever is born of God doth not continue in sin; for the Spirit of God remaineth in him.* (1 John 3:9)

Again the King James Version says whosoever is born of God cannot sin. We know that is not true because we have been born again and we sin, but we do not continue in sin because the Spirit of God remaineth in us, and it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance. As often as you repent, He says, I will forgive you. And when you are forgiven, you are perfect in Christ.

Are you excited about the hope we have in Jesus Christ? Are you excited about the fact that we do not have to carry our burdens? We do not have to carry our guilt. We can be free in Christ and we can walk, as it were, above the vicissitudes of this life and find ourselves walking in strength in dynamism and power, and we become living, breathing witnesses of Jesus Christ. As we do this, arm and arm, collectively, our testimony is magnified and all of a sudden we find the strength and the power to bring the future into the present. As a people we become mobilized, energized and empowered to be His people. We can see the towers of Zion glitter, we can see the golden streets, and as a people, we can actually live the promises in the present as we look forward to the future. Nephi writes: *We labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.* (2 Nephi 11:43-44)

I really think Latter Day Saints struggle with lists. Have you ever made a list? My wife is a great list maker. She writes everything on Post-it Notes. In fact, she said, "Patrick, if I had invented Post-it Notes, we would be billionaires." We have used so many. They are all over the counter. They are in our car. They are on the mirror. They are in all kinds of places. In fact, some of the notes are on there to remind you to make a note. We have so many notes! When you think about it, we labor diligently that we might be persuaded that we are saved by grace after all we can do. I keep the Word of Wisdom. I study, fast, and pray. I go to church. I bare my testimony to my neighbors. We have a list of all these duties that we have to do. But I do not believe in lists even though my wife runs our home by lists. What I really believe is if we come unto Christ, then we keep the things on the list. We do not do those things so that we become righteous. Our desire to press into Christ persuades us to do the things on the list and we are righteous. It is just a matter of perspective. But I do not think we can do enough good things—we can't create enough virtue—to justify God's saving us. He saves us by His grace because He is God, because He is full of grace, because He is full of mercy, not because we merit it. We merit nothing of ourselves because we have a fallen, corruptible nature, but He placed His Spirit in us because He loves us and He wants to recreate Himself in us. In Romans, It says: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed through faith on his name; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.* (Romans 1:16-17)

Where is the righteousness of God revealed? In the Gospel. *And this is my gospel: repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.* (Doctrine and Covenants 39:2b)

That is it. There is no other gospel. No other doctrine. That is His doctrine. We create a lot of things and call it doctrine: the doctrine of the priesthood, the doctrine of stewardship. Those are not doctrines. Those are principles. Those are laws. They are important and I do not want to minimize them, but they are not the gospel. We are so caught up in Church structure and church organization and the do's and the don'ts that we fail to remember the gospel. The gospel is so simple a child can understand it. Jesus came, and He died, and everything else is an appendage to that message. The Book of Mormon has the clearest and most pronounced evidence of Jesus Christ. Almost every page oozes with the testimony of Jesus. Every page testifies of who He is and of His covenants to gather His people. So the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel and to be righteous means you are right with God. How many of you would like to be right with God? All of you. Where do you find that righteousness in the Gospel? And what is the gospel? This is my gospel faith, repentance and baptism.

If we endure to the end and claim the promise, we are sanctified. We are justified. We are redeemed. We are saved. We are spotless. We are guiltless and we are perfect in Christ. Do any of you know anyone that is perfect in Christ? When we started, I asked the question, "Do you know anyone that is perfect?" We went all the way back to Elbert A. Smith and we couldn't find anybody, but you were perfect in Christ. Claim the promise. Daily claim the promise and find that you are now walking in a way, and in the means, and in the power you have never understood before, that you become strong in Him, and that He can fight your battles. Isn't it wonderful to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, to be His son and daughter, to be a part of that Royal Family? I believe this changes everything. At least it does for me. As a people we carry guilt. We have misgivings. "We labor to present all men perfect in Christ." This is the power of the atonement, and as a people today we, as never before, need to be introduced to Jesus.

When I graduated from high school, I had a burning desire to play basketball. I was on a championship team four years in a row in high school and was set to play for De Anza Junior College in Cupertino, California. I had been in a summer league. I knew the coach. I was sure I would make the team. I was anticipating that was my future. I went to a senior high camp in Happy Valley, California, and Roy Cheville was the guest minister. He did not drive but he had a man that drove him. His name was Wayne Zion, and we said he was driven by the cause of Zion. I do not know just what it was, but something captured me, and I just completely turned face, and I came to Graceland. I still played basketball, and I went through the motions like every young person does. I was away from home. I do not think I got into any trouble. I do not think I did anything that was too bad. But I really wasn't ready for college. I just wasn't very mature and I had a lot of time having fun. I always went to class and took copious notes because I never read a single book. I never read my assignments, but I knew if the



teacher said it, that would be important and that is what I took notes on, and I kind of navigated my way through my first year in second gear.

There was a friend of mine whose name was Rudy Leutzinger. He was a priest in the church. He was an athlete, he wrestled, he ran track, and I liked Rudy. He appealed to me. He was a couple years older than me, and he would ask me, "Patrick, have you read this book?" regarding the Book of Mormon. I said no. I had heard about it all my life but never really read it. My mom made me read from it in family devotions, but I had never read the book. Time after time Rudy would say, "Hey, have you read this book?" "Hey, have you read this book?" And it bothered me. I went home the summer between my sophomore and junior year, and I read the Book of Mormon, the first book I ever picked up and read on my own and something happened to me. I met someone I had heard about my whole life, but I had never known. I met Jesus. He changed my life. Now I have not been perfect or I have not been sinless, but I have never lost sight of the testimony that I found, and it has been a benchmark for me that has guided me all my life since that point forward.

I do believe that I am perfect in Christ. I do believe that He holds us guiltless as often as we repent. We are perfect in Christ. Anyway, this world needs to be introduced to Jesus. We need to shout Him from the rooftops, in the church and out of the church, in our families, in our jobs, in our schools, in our neighborhoods, wherever we are. We need to be instant in season and we need to bear witness that Jesus is the Lord. How do you know Him? How do you really know somebody? Well, again, the Book of Mormon comes to our rescue. Jacob writes and says, *Why not speak of the atonement of Christ, and attain to a perfect knowledge of him.* (Jacob 3:18)

If we want to know Christ, then speak of the atonement. The atonement is the life, the ministry, the death and the resurrection of Jesus and all the promises, illustrating how mercy overpowers justice; how He takes our weaknesses and makes them strong; how He bears our sins and carries our infirmities; how He is quick to respond. Everything we believe is captured through the power of the atonement. If we want to know Jesus, let us speak of the atonement of Christ. Of all the principles outlined in the Book of Mormon, this is the most significant.

You know, I have not mentioned the church here this morning. I have not mentioned organization. I have not mentioned the thing that we so often seem to stumble on. Here is an early revelation. I know that Ron is in this congregation, and I know you have heard him refer to the scripture, but I am going to refer to it also. This came before the church was organized. It came in the early days of the translation of the Book of Mormon. And notice what the Lord said, how He defined His church for us. *Behold, this is my doctrine: Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church; whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore, he is not of my church. 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. And now, remember the words of him*

who is the life and light of the world, your Redeemer, your Lord, and your God. Amen. (Doctrine and Covenants 3:16-18)

Notice He said, 'endure in His church to the end,' but He defined His church as those who 'repent and come unto Him.' He did not say, 'endure in an organization.' He did not say, 'endure in an institution.' He did not say all of those rules are what defines whether you are in the church or whether you are not. What defines His body is those who embrace His gospel—His doctrine, and if we do, and claim that promise, the Book of Mormon says there are only two churches. It does not say there will be in the future, it says there are save two churches only. One is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the Church of the Devil. I had some Mormon friends I went to high school with, and I liked them, but my mom alerted me to not get too friendly with the Mormons. She said, 'They are nice people, but that is the Church of the Devil. They are just not the Lord's people.' I thought that was a little strange because they were really nice kids. I did fellowship with them but I did keep my distance with them. I had a misunderstanding. I defined the church in order of an institution. I am not saying God does not have an organization, but really, He wants a living, breathing organism, the body of Christ—a body of believers. If we as Latter Day Saints could gather around the doctrine of Christ and define His church as the scriptures define it, all the walls that divide this people would go away, and we would become a powerful and a dynamic people.

I want to take just a few minutes to tell you about this recent event we held in Independence called the Book of Mormon Rally. It was a summer long initiative, trying to encourage the citizens of Independence to begin using the Book of Mormon. We have Church of Christ Temple Lot, the Remnant Church, the Church of Christ Restored, the Restoration Branches and all the variations of those. We have the Mormons and all of these Book of Mormon believers in Independence.

You know I have lived in Independence for over 45 years, and I have never seen the Book of Mormon advertised by any church in the Restoration in our community. Do you know we do not even have a bookstore? The RLDS church does not have a bookstore. The Community of Christ does not. Price Publishing has a bookstore and that is it. The Mormons do not have a bookstore in Independence. The Hedrickites do not. We Josephites really do not. You have to wonder why it is as a people we can't advertise or testify of who we are so we put up billboards. We advertised it. We made videos, we invited people to this event, and a few people came. The ones who came I believe were enriched and we learned several things.

We had people in the Restoration Branches who believe in the Book of Mormon. They came and we put everybody on a short leash—10 minutes. Imagine putting Ron Smith on 10 minutes, but that is what we did. We put people on leashes so that everybody could hear these eight different speakers all talking about the power of the book. We had a Catholic who uses the Book of Mormon during mass. I thought, well, that is odd. Doesn't he know what Mormon says about all little children are alive in Christ, and if you baptize an infant then you are in the gall of bitterness and



bonds of iniquity? I thought that was unusual, so I called him. I had a conversation with him. He lives in Idaho, and he says, "Well, not all Catholics believe that, Patrick." Very interesting gentleman. I had a fellow who I had run across online, and he has a YouTube channel. He called me up and wanted to interview me a couple of times and we did. We became friends online. I had never met him. He said, "I want to come to your rally and I want to speak." I said, "Are you a believer in the Book Mormon?" He says, "I am a fan of the Book of Mormon." He is an evangelical, charismatic protestant. He came and spoke. We had Lynne Ridenower, who is a Baptist minister some of you know. He came and bore witness to the Book of Mormon. We had a young lady from the Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonite), headquartered in Pennsylvania. She came and told how Angel Moroni appeared to her grandmother. We had Restoration Branch people like brother Ron speak at this event.

Do you know what these three non-restoration people told us? When we visited with them they said, "We do not understand why you Latter Day Saints can't work together. We do not understand that." So we wonder, "How is this message going to get around the world?" Well, God is busy doing things in spite of us. There are people outside the Restoration who have an affinity for this book and are using it, and are reaching people that you and I would never reach or interact with. Elbert A. Smith said, "There are forces at work in this world that you know not of." The world does not see it at all, and you see very little of it. But you know the day is soon coming when God is going to make bare His arm. He is going to bend the heavens and shake the earth and He is going to come out of hiding. He is going to reveal the power and the efficacy of this book, because it is the instrument designed by God to gather His people to build the holy city.

How many of you believe in Zion this morning? How many believe you have the Holy Ghost? How many of you believe you have the power of the Holy Ghost? The power of the Holy Ghost is directly attributable to our desire to seek to bring forth Zion. *And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost.* (1 Nephi 3:187) If we do not have a desire to manifest, build, live, experience, and witness Zion, we are not going to have the power of the Holy Ghost, and so that is a mechanism that we need to embrace as a people so that we are no longer static—that we no longer just hold on— but that we become a dynamic people, ready and engaged for work.

Have you ever wondered about things you do not know how to do? I do not know how to do that. It is overwhelming. You know, when the military recruiters come to high school, they go there and meet those 17 and 18 year old youngsters that they want to get into the military. They do not care that they know how to polish shoes or which end of the gun they use. All they want you to do is enlist. And once you are enlisted, they got you, and then they begin teaching you, training you, putting you through boot camp, making you a soldier. God does not care what you know, He just wants you to enlist, and if you enlist He will train you,

raise you up, and make you soldiers for Him so that we can go to battle.

A new day is soon to dawn. This book is going to flood the earth, and these three people outside the Restoration gave us a glimpse of what God is about to do: to unleash His arm. So I ask, "How often has the book been in your hands as you have journeyed along in life?" And I would answer that to the same degree, the vision of Zion is in our hearts as a people. I believe that you are the apple of His eye. You are the Lord's people. You have obeyed the gospel. And now He has got us. We are enlisted. Now He is asking us to become soldiers, foot soldiers for Him to change our communities. "Each one win one." You know you can double the size of your congregation in one year if just each one of you can bring someone else to hear the gospel and they obey it and they become recipients of the same blessing you have. Then the next year we double again. There is no end to what God is about to do and I invite you to enlist with Him, claim the promise, and believe that you are perfect in Christ. *And if you are perfect in Christ, you can no wise deny the Power of God. His grace is sufficient for you, that by His grace you May be perfect in Christ.* Amen and Amen.

Memories **Priest Rodney Bastow** **September 26, 2021**

As a Call to Worship, Elder Steven Smith shared Jeremiah 3:15. *And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.* Today we have a chance to set apart Ed Anderson with a special blessing of the Spirit so that he will be able to guide us as pastor of the Mount Ayr Restoration Branch and help this congregation with both understanding and knowledge.

Tony Crandell shared: The Setting Apart Blessing is probably more traditional than it is part of any ordinance. There are sections in the Doctrine & Covenants that refer to it but they do not command it. The term of "holiness" does not refer to a degree of piety or perfection. When the Bible calls something holy, it is not speaking of the purity of righteousness but rather something that is set apart from everything else to do a divine job. With this new understanding let me just share two short scriptures this morning. In Leviticus and 1st Peter it says, *Be holy as I am holy.* Many have understood this to mean that we are required to be perfect like God. If we could be perfect on our own or simply encouraged to do so, we wouldn't have a need for the sacrifice of Jesus. We simply can't do it. In this verse God is not putting something on us that we cannot carry out nor is He requiring us to be perfectly sinless on our own to do his will. He's saying He wants us to choose to be uniquely different from our surroundings and focused in the way that He wants us to be. Holiness is not about being perfect but instead being set apart for a divine purpose. Brother Ed this morning is choosing and willing to be set apart for God for the specific purpose of leading and pastoring this congregation.



Ed Anderson was set apart by High Priest Joel Loving and Elder Tony Crandell.

My scripture reading this morning comes from Matthew 22:34-39. *Then one of them, a lawyer, tempting him, asked, saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

Good morning. I feel blessed to be here this morning and I thank God for this opportunity. I pray that the words that I have prepared will be His words and we can all feel blessed for being here this morning. If that's the case may all praise and glory go to our Heavenly Father.

I've got to admit to you it's been a challenge to know what to say today. I'm not coaching any more so I can't come up with any football stories. Calving season, I don't really want to talk about that either. We have had a lot of things going on as a congregation. It's been hard for me to know what to think and I wasn't sure what to say. Traditionally when I didn't know what to say and I couldn't think of something to say, I would talk about me so today that's what I am going to do. I hope this is appropriate and I hope you'll find something relevant to your life in what I say today.

I'm going to show my age a little bit and take you back to when I started college. I started college over 50 years ago. It seems like a long time ago, doesn't it but it doesn't feel that way. It had always been my dream growing up to be a veterinarian and that's what I set out to do. By the time I got to that point it wasn't actually what I really wanted to do. What I really wanted to do was farm and raise livestock but back then if you didn't go to college you felt like a failure and people said that you had to go to college. You've got to have something to fall back on. You can't just farm so I went to college.

I went to Graceland and I wasn't a very good student. I didn't like to read. I didn't like to study. I could get Bs usually without too much trouble so why try to get an A? It just didn't seem worth it to me so I probably didn't put a lot of effort into it. By the time I got done with my junior year I could see that my grades were not going to allow me to go to vet school so I switched my major to education. That doesn't speak well for teachers does it but that's what I decided to do. Growing up I had never considered being a teacher. In fact, we used to make fun of the kids that were going to be teachers. Once I student taught I thought, 'Yeah I think I'm going to like this. I think it is something that I want to try.'

I found out that I enjoyed working with young people. Those first groups that I worked with I talked to them about life and I enjoyed doing that. I talked to them about the world around them, about rocks, about clouds, all sorts of things. I talked to them about what things were made up of, about matter, element, atoms and things like that. I enjoyed the attention I got from those young people. I enjoyed entertaining and I enjoyed getting to know them and watching them learn.

Looking back I did put a lot of work into teaching. I prepared most of my own materials. I didn't really use a text book. I used my own, what I thought was important for them to know and that took a lot of work. I prepared my own worksheets. I spent a lot of time checking papers. As I look back I could have done a better job. As a science teacher I probably should have had more hands-on activities because that's what those kids really enjoy. They learn a lot from doing things like that. I should have had the kids do more interactive things where they told me what was going on and where they taught each other and let them learn by doing. I could have been more patient and kind.

After ten years of teaching I decided I wanted a change. There were several reasons for that but I decided that anyway so I became a 7th through 12th grade principal. I did this for about the next fifteen years. You know it wasn't anything like what I expected. I remember when I went to school the principal was in control. You didn't mess with the principal and I couldn't imagine anyone disputing or questioning his authority. It just didn't happen. That's what I was expecting. That's what I thought it would be like for me but I found out as a principal you had to please a lot of people. You had to please the teachers. They wanted a certain schedule. They wanted certain things done their way. You had to please the superintendent. He was telling you what you should and shouldn't be doing. Then there was the board of education. A lot of times they thought they knew your job better than you did and they had their own ideas about things. Then there were the parents. The parents who always thought their kids were the brightest, the best athletes, the best behaved kids that there ever were.

I thought I could make some changes to help the students get a better education. I found out people don't like change. They want things to be the way that they were all the time. I had a parent one time come in and said that when he was in school the superintendent (He called me a superintendent because he didn't know the difference between a principal and a superintendent because he probably didn't have one.) came in and started the fire in the morning, drove the bus to pick everybody up, taught a class or two and coached the basketball team. They each had their own self-interests and I didn't handle that very well. Consequently, I was fired three times and each time it wasn't because I was doing a bad job but it was because I upset the wrong people.

One thing that bothered me when I first started as a principal was that it took me away from the kids. I was one step removed. You couldn't have that closeness that you could as a teacher. Mainly the kids that I saw were those that were in trouble and I got to know some of them pretty well. I enjoyed being around all of the students. I liked to think that I was their best cheerleader, probably their biggest. I felt like I was close to them.

Twice after I got fired the students asked me to speak at their graduation. I felt honored by that. I had an experience one time after one of those commencement messages. It was a tough time, probably the first time I had lost a job and it was very emotional. My commencement address I thought went really well except that the board president didn't like me shaking all of the kids' hands and then not shaking his



hand. When I got done there I breathed a sigh of relief that it was over with. I was feeling pretty good and I went out in the hallway from the gymnasium where we had the ceremony and this man came up to me. I had never seen him before. He looked like Ray Landrum. Do you remember Ray from down here? That's what this guy looked like. He was kind of a little thin guy, kind of dark complected and he came up to me and said, 'Why did you quit?' I said, 'Well, I didn't quit. I got fired.' He said, 'You can't quit. You need to keep doing this.' At the time I thought this was pretty bad advice because how was I going to keep doing this when I didn't have a job. I thanked him and went on. I didn't think too much about it. I went to my office and my guidance counselor came in. Sharon was raised in the area. She was older than I was and she knew everybody. She said, 'Did that man find you?' I said, 'Yeah.' 'Well, I don't know who that was but he was sure looking for you and he sure wanted to talk to you.' It was unusual for Sharon not to have known who that was. I kept thinking about this and wondering who was that guy? Maybe he was sent from God. Maybe he was one of the Three Nephites. I've always thought that.

You know I probably could have done better as a principal if I would have gone along with the status quo. If I would have socialized more. If I would have gone to the places where a lot of 'the' people of the community were going. If I would have maybe played favoritism a little bit to some of the right students, I may be could have kept my job. I maybe could have stayed a little longer but to me that would have been selling my soul and I couldn't see that I could do that.

I've always thought it was kind of funny. After I got fired the third time, this is from the last school that I was at, they hired me to stay there and teach math. I always thought that was funny but each time when I got fired the superintendent who was always the one that had to give me the bad news, he would say, 'They really like you and they really think you are a nice guy but they want somebody different.' So I guess because I was a nice guy they hired me to stay on and teach math. I was thankful for that because I needed the job and it turned out to be a really great job. I really enjoyed it. I hadn't thought about being a math teacher. Well, I started out as a math teacher but it was junior high. This was upper math. It was Algebra I and II and Geometry. I had to work pretty hard to educate myself about geometry again and about algebra again but I really enjoyed it and I think I learned something. I think I became a better teacher because when I taught before it was my way or the highway, you know what I'm saying. If they didn't get it, too bad. There's an F. This time I tried to make sure the kids were successful. I did extra tutoring with them. I retested them. I did things to try to help them to learn and I took more of an interest in them. I think I maybe loved them more than when I taught before but it was a really good experience and I really enjoyed it.

After I retired I thought, 'What am I going to do to stay in touch with young people and do things like that because I really enjoyed it so I started coaching in Mount Ayr. I did that for 12 or 13 years. You know there are so many young people that need someone to care about them. There are so many young people that need to hear a kind

word, need support and need encouragement. I found out today that one of my former players had a mental breakdown and he's 16 or 17 years old. Why does that happen? He needs someone to take more of an interest in his life.

I enjoyed watching the kids perform. I enjoyed watching them have fun. When they won you would see the joy on their faces and it was really special to me. I built some special relationships with several of those students. It's funny over the last 12 years I usually have someone that helps me on the farm and it is usually one of my former players. Of course, they move on and move away and I wonder who the next one is going to be. Then somehow here comes another one to help me on the farm. I've got one that I had a really special relationship with and next Saturday I will be performing his wedding which I feel like that is kind of an honor. I feel good about that.

I'm done coaching so I don't know how I am going to develop these relationships again. Hopefully, I can go into the wrestling room or I keep thinking I would go on to the football field and watch the junior high but I haven't done that yet. The Lord will give me something to do or find a way where I can get involved.

For over 60 years, that seems old too doesn't it, I've been a member of this church and I've been a member of the priesthood for over 45 years which seems like a long time too. I believe that as members of this church we are called to serve. It could be as a teacher. It could be as a vet. It could be as a lawyer. It could be as a nurse. It could be whatever. I believe through my teaching and my coaching I have served the Lord and I believe that I have loved others. I also believe that I can do better. I can spend more time in study and prayer. I can be more caring and giving. I can visit more in person and I can be there more in times of need for those around me. I can be more patient and more understanding and I can be more willing to share with others my testimony of Jesus. I probably didn't join this church to serve. I grew to know that was something special about this church. We enjoy serving. We enjoy reaching out to others and we enjoy each other.

Back in the early days, that's even before I came along, this church or I guess the church up on the hill grew because the members cared about each other. They were neighbors. They were friends. They worked together. They played cards together. That's how a lot of them got acquainted with the church. It was like one big expanded family. I hope we still feel that way. There have been times when I have come to church on a spiritual low and I maybe didn't even want to come to church that day but for some reason I did, I felt like I had to or whatever. But this church, you people, you have been my sanctuary. Because of your love, because of the good spirit that you bring with you, I've been lifted up. My problems don't seem so bad and I can face the new week.

I found a song that I've never heard before. I still haven't really listened to it but when I found it I really liked the words in it. I hope you will like it too.

*I believe in God the Father, Jesus Christ, His only Son,
And the blessed Holy Spirit distinct yet three in one.
I believe there is forgiveness for everything we've done*



And that is why all the more I will serve Him.

*I believe the Son of God was crucified upon the tree,
Laid within a borrowed tomb not far from Calvary.
I believe He rose from the dead alive for all to see
That is why all the more I will serve Him.*

*I've made my decision. I have stated my claim.
I've drawn a line in the sand and I'll not be ashamed.
For the world behind me and the cross before
By the grace of God I will serve the Lord.*

*I believe you must be born again, John 3:16 is true.
The old life can be washed away and everything made new.
I believe the love of God can somehow find it's way to you
And that is why all the more I will serve Him.*

*I've made my decision. I have stated my claim.
I've drawn a line in the sand and I'll not be ashamed.
For the world behind me and the cross before
By the grace of God I will serve the Lord.*

*I know when satan and his minions come to torment me
When I invoke the name of Jesus every demon has to flee.
I know the time will come when Christ returns again some
day.
Til then there's just one name on earth whereby man can be
saved.*

*I believe there's a right and a wrong, a time to live and die
And the scripture is the blueprint that all men should live by.
I believe I'm not alone with my faith in Jesus Christ
That is why all the more we will serve Him.*

*We have made our decision. We have stated our claim.
We have drawn a line in the sand and we will not be
ashamed.*

*With the world behind us and the cross before
By the grace of God we will serve the Lord.*

*I've made my decision. I have stated my claim.
I've drawn a line in the sand and I'll not be ashamed.
For the world behind me and the cross before
By the grace of God I will serve the Lord.
By the grace of God I will serve the Lord.
By the grace of God I will serve the Lord.*

Blessings
Deacon Robert Rowland
October 17, 2021

Our speaker this morning will be Bob Rowland. Most of you know that he is my son-in-law. It's always a pleasure for me to be here with Bob. Those of you who know his history just know that it's a real joy to me to have him and Jenni and their daughter Teegan and her son Ace here today. When I think about my children, even though one of my daughters is no longer associated with the Restoration she still is focused on the Lord, I really appreciate the fact that the Lord has worked with my children and granted them a

relationship with Him that gives them a foundation for dealing with life. I am grateful that He does that for the rest of us too. There were times when I was afraid that wasn't going to be so but it is and it's by the power and the grace of God. I am glad to be here with all of you. I am glad, Bob, that you are going to have an opportunity to share with these people. I don't know if this is true. I heard a rumor that his wife had to stop him from getting a CLOSED sign and bringing it over and putting in on the front door to try and get out of this. I know, Bob, that you aren't always comfortable with this. This is kind of out of your comfort zone but I know that every time he is asked, he accepts the responsibility and always brings ministry to me anyhow.

As a Call to Worship our presider, Sherman Phipps, read Genesis 3:30. *For, as I, the Lord God, liveth, even so my words cannot return void, for, as they go forth out of my mouth, they must be fulfilled.*

For my scripture today I have chosen two. The first comes from Acts the 20th chapter and the 35th verse. *I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.* My second scripture is from Ephesians 1:3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*

Good morning. It's a beautiful day outside today. When Jen and I came to church this morning we got partway here and probably one of the biggest bald eagles I had ever seen flew right across the road in front of us. For those of you who know me I'm very into nature and animals. It was pretty cool.

Jennifer told me that I was going to speaking today a couple of weeks ago. I'm one that usually waits, as you all know, until the last minute to put anything together. I was prompted to speak about blessings and the more I thought about it even though I thought I wanted to talk about something else, the word blessings kept coming back. So I am going to talk about blessings a little bit as well as a little bit on miracles and reflection. For those of you who don't me I am an instructor for brick layers at the union hall in Marshalltown, Iowa. I had training this last week from 8 o'clock in the morning until typically 5 o'clock at night on Zoom because we couldn't go to Maryland where we would normally take our training because of the Covid issue. They talked about reflection a little bit during one of my classes.

There are two different types of blessings. We have physical and we have spiritual blessings. I know that when we pray we give thanks for the many blessings that Jesus gives to us each and every day throughout our lives. I got to thinking is blessings another way of saying that we're spoiled because we take a lot of things for granted. At least I do. When I say we most of the time I am referring to myself.

I got to looking at the definition of blessing. The Bible describes it as a favor or gift bestowed by God therefore bringing happiness. As some of you know there are good blessings and sometimes you look at some blessings that are not so good. Like when my Mom passed away who had Alzheimers and suffered from dementia a little bit. People told me that it was a blessing that she was taken. At the time that that happened I didn't look at it that way. It



didn't seem like a blessing to me. She was gone but now later on I am better with her passing and thinking it is a blessing. I think a lot of times when things happen we don't really recognize them as blessings. We don't realize it until later on.

Earlier when I asked if blessings were a sign that we were spoiled. The things that we take for granted like waking up every day, having a clean house, a roof. I really appreciate the stories that Ron brings back from Africa. The people over there don't have all the blessings that we have. We can get up in the morning, walk over and flip the light switch on. There are so many that don't have that. These are all blessings. It's a blessing to be able to wake up and turn a light on to see.

I think a lot of times blessings, at least to me, go unappreciated. I look over at my wife and I know what's going to happen on my way home. She is always constantly telling me that I should be thankful for all my blessings. I'm probably the biggest one that doesn't always take that into account on things that are happening. I'll be upset about something and she will say you need to count your blessings for what you have and what you've experienced instead of focusing on what's not going right for you right now. I'm sure she will share that with me again on the way home. Being a blessing to others - what does that mean? Does that mean doing an unselfish act for someone not worrying about how your time is used up by helping somebody else out. I did something a little bit different this time too. I wrote notes down. Normally, I just shoot from the hip and go with what I'm led with but this time I wrote some notes that I could make reference too.

Last weekend Jennifer and I went camping to an area that we've been trying to go to for some time, Decorah, Iowa. I was there years and years ago. It's a beautiful place this time of year. Of course, it's probably better now than when we were there. Trees were starting to change color a little bit but not like they probably are right now. I looked at this as a blessing. We were able to go. We got things taken care of at home. We had no issues on the trip which was a blessing. Once we got there, of course, we were reminded of who is in charge because it was pouring rain. Of course, you have to set up the camper and get things ready. We had never been to this place so we had to get everything hooked up like water and electric and get unhooked. I think we estimated that it was about a 4 or 5 hour trip which ended up being more like 6 by the time we got there.

It rained but once again we were blessed because everything worked out perfectly. We were able to get up the next morning and go and experience some of Decorah's offerings. They have beautiful buildings. We went in some shops and spoke to some people which was a blessing as well. The beauty that we saw and the traveling were just the gifts that God gives us each and every day that had we not gone we wouldn't have experienced. To me that was a blessing as well.

I think everything that happens to us is a blessing but we don't take it as such. We just take it that that's how it's supposed to be. Once again for those of you who don't know me I have been a brick layer for 30 years and now am finally able at 65 to work in Marshalltown and teach others how to do. These last 7 weeks I was actually given more time to go around and check on jobs. I'm getting closer and closer to

being out of the workforce as far as hands-on. This body is telling me that that is a blessing.

Some miracles - I have two miracles sitting over there by my wife, one of my children and my grandson. Miracles and blessings, I think, kind of go side by side. We have been very fortunate that in this pandemic and everything my daughter did get Covid after she had had our grandson. However, she didn't experience any illnesses, another blessing.

There are a couple of areas in Des Moines, East 14th on the northeast side and East 15th, that proves that it's a miracle that I am here today. I was actually checking on jobs and my mind was somewhere else. I was going down the interstate and took the East 15th exit. Anyone that is really familiar with that road, it takes you northbound and is two lanes. It's usually pretty busy. Maybe not quite as busy as the interstate but close. I was traveling down off the exit which is a pretty sizable exit and was doing 35 mph before I knew it. There was a STOP sign as you get off the ramp to cross 15th to go to 14th. As soon as I realized it, I looked and I'm in the middle of the intersection but there wasn't a car in any direction that I could see, nothing. As soon as I got through that intersection, two semis came by. I think it was a wake-up call to be more thankful, to appreciate the blessings that are given and to understand who really is in charge. Since that has happened I think of that every day and how awful that could have been. Once again it was a true miracle. I didn't share this to scare my wife because I drive all the time. I literally had to pull over and take a deep breath. I welled up and thought that could have been it.

How many times our health is a blessing. Our family has experienced Covid. We were truly blessed in the way that we had it. I lost my taste and smell for about 8 hours. That was it. I didn't even have a runny nose. Jennifer experienced the typical body aches and really bad cold symptoms. We isolated ourselves but it's hard to isolate in a household. She stayed in the bedroom. Ryder stayed out in the living areas but we still tested positive. Ryder got it and he lost his sense of taste and smell for a couple of weeks but we weren't hospitalized. We didn't go through a lot of the trauma that others have gone through. This was another blessing for our family.

Some blessings came from Covid. I looked at different things online. A lot of things that happened to families, loss of life, the separation, not being able to do different things still brought blessings as well. We now have Zoom. We actually have people involved in our congregation from Africa, people from our family in Ohio and get on and participate in our services. I don't know that our congregation would have done that without that pandemic. Maybe, maybe not but that's when it came forth. For those people that did isolate themselves I think it was a blessing that it brought them closer together as a family unit. Jennifer and I may have a difference of opinion on that when we get back in the car because I know I'm gone a lot of times during the week and only home on the weekends so that closeness day-after-day when you are not used to it can be a little bit touchy. I really do believe that that was a blessing for a lot of people. So there was good that came out of the pandemic even though there was a lot of bad.



Being able to go to school is a blessing. Think of the third world countries or over in Africa where we send money so that their children can go to school. We just take it for granted. We get up and go to school. My kids used to protest about getting up and going. I did too. Our income, the things that we do, the things that we were given in order to do the jobs that we do to provide for our families or provide for others. They are all blessings.

What about a bathroom? Everybody has a bathroom but think of these developing countries that don't. Think of the sanitation issues that come from that, the illnesses and the death that's caused by that sort of environment. How many times do you get up and go to the bathroom and never even give it a second thought. It's second nature. It's just supposed to be.

A little bit of a funny story when we went to Decorah the first thing we did when we got there and got set up, we sat on the couch and realized that we didn't have any internet. We were camping but we both said, 'Now what are we going to do?' How many people in the world don't have a cell phone or don't have the money for the cell phone let alone the connection that you can have by being on the internet with FaceTime and talking with other people. We don't give it a second thought but we pulled out our phones that night freaking out because they were not working rather than being happy and being thankful for what we had.

There are people in other areas of the world that don't have the steady income and the moneys that come in from the jobs and things that we do. Another one is water. It is one of the most important things that we need to live. I read something that said if you take a 5 minute shower there's people over in other countries that don't use that much water in a whole day and yet we take it for granted. How many times do we turn on the faucet and let it run to get it to the temperature that we want. In order for me to drink something other than coffee the water has to be almost crystalized cold so how many times do I turn the faucet on and let that water run until it gets cold enough to drink. All that water has just been wasted and yet there are other people that don't have enough water to meet their daily needs.

It is a blessing to be able to worship freely. I think somebody shared not too long ago that there are 300 to 400 Christians that a die a day based on their faith and where they live. We have the opportunity to freely worship. I look at that as a blessing.

I think after the little incident that I shared about the incident on East 15th it has given me a whole different perspective on being appreciative of the things that I have, the things that are given to me. I am appreciative of you people and the blessing that you have been to me. I have been blessed by each and every one of you that I have encountered in this congregation. It's just like now and being able to be here today is a blessing. I believe that everything happens for a reason. Me being up here speaking right now has happened for a reason. I am not sure what it is yet but I'll find out later I'm sure. I am hoping that what I share in some way, some how maybe not today but down the road will be a blessing to where something that happens to you or something you experience that you just take for granted or

may not give a thought to you will realize was a blessing that it happened to you today.

There are so many things when I sat down and was writing these notes that I wanted to share. Another one was the roof over our head. There was no spirituality in my family. I wasn't raised in the church. There was no speaking of the gospel or Jesus in my family growing up. Then I met Jennifer and those of you who know the Phipps, know they are a very spiritual family so I married into it. It took Jennifer a lot of persuading and a lot of fussing. I went for several years without coming to church as you well know. Then Sherman and I decided to replace the roof on our house. We peeled the roof off and was doing certain things that we thought we were supposed to do. Then we had a torrential downpour of 7 to 8 inches in a matter of hours. Long story short we lost about every ceiling in our house. The loss of not having a roof stood out in my mind at that time. We had it but it was like we were in the rain forest in the house but then the congregation came together. I didn't go to church every Sunday but every member of our church family came to our aid. Di Smith was trying to carry squares of shingles up a ladder. Jim Barber who has a hook in place of one of his hands was up on the roof pounding nails with his hook. That's what brought me to the church. There were so many blessings that came through the congregation responding to our need.

Look at everything that you do when you wake up, every move you make, everybody you encounter as a blessing because it is. I think things are going to happen that you are not going to agree with or may go the wrong way but I think later on things will work out. Things that happen to me that frustrate me or irritate me especially being an instructor but later on those different things are also a blessing because of the way that that was presented to me that I took the wrong way or didn't like the way I took it, I was able to come up with a different approach that maybe I wouldn't have thought of had that not have happened that way. I think things that happen to us we may not recognize it as a blessing today but later on down the road we will understand what has happened. In closing I found a story that I want you to think about on your travels home.

The man whispered, God speak to me and a meadowlark sang but the man did not hear.

So the man yelled, God speak to me and the thunder rolled across the sky but the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, God let me see you and a star shone brightly but the man did not notice.

The man shouted, show me a miracle and a life was born but the man did not know.

So the man cried in despair, touch me God and let me know that you are here whereupon God reached down and touched the man but the man brushed the butterfly away and walked away.

Don't miss out on a blessing because it is not packaged the way you expect.



An Angel Taught Me

By Sherman Phipps, Sr.

I had an experience with an angel in January, 1944, while I was in the service at Hunter Field near Montgomery, Alabama. I was 22 years old at the time.

I had been given the Three Standard Books of the Church as a gift when I graduated from high school, and I was somewhat disappointed at the time because I could not read well at all. But after Dorthy and I were married on May 8, 1942, Dorthy would read to me. From the time we were married, we always tried to read some scripture before retiring each evening. What had seemed like a disappointing gift became my most precious possession!

Dorthy had been able to be with me during most of my first two years of service during World War II except for a few weeks just before and after the birth of our first son, Sherman. But the time came when that was no longer possible; she had to take our young son and return home while I moved on to other areas of service.

I loved hearing Dorthy read the Scriptures to me, and I felt very much alone in spite of the presence of the many men around me. I tried time and again to read the Church books, but I simply could not read them. I could read only the small words, but I could make no sense of the larger words.

My inability to read in no way indicated that I was uneducated in other ways. I was a skilled auto mechanic and worker in wood. I could do almost anything anyone could do with his hands. The inability to read, however, kept me from progressing to a higher rank and better pay.

I had just been shipped to Hunter Field after my unit had been simulating combat, where our fare had consisted largely of dehydrated foods, dried potatoes, and dried cheese to take the place of butter. In every way the food had been very poor. At the new base I had eaten one meal, a delicious breakfast with pancakes and real butter. I was eagerly looking forward to my second good meal when an exciting experience occurred.

After breakfast I went back to the barracks and again attempted to read the Scriptures. I was praying about many things. Since I was a new father I had a desire to know how I was to raise my new son. I asked the Lord if the work was really true. Was Joseph Smith truly a prophet? I wanted to know because if this really was God's Church, I wanted to raise my son to serve Him in it. If it was not true, I didn't want to waste my time.

One of the last things Dorthy had read to me before she left stuck in my mind. She had read James 1:5: "*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*" Over and over the instruction raced through my mind until finally I decided to put it to the test. I prayed about it and did ask God; and when I picked up the Doctrine and Covenants to try reading again, I was blessed! The Spirit came over me very strongly, and I could read! I was really thrilled! I could read every word - the big ones and the little ones! I was given to know each word, how to read it, and what it meant! There was such a wonderful Spirit!

The good food and the approaching dinner hour kept entering my thoughts. I was really tempted to go eat, but I was having such a wonderful experience reading and understanding - gaining knowledge I had never had before - that I decided to skip dinner and continue reading as long as the Spirit was with me. In that Spirit, I could read very fast. I would stop every once in a while as questions came into my mind, but I really didn't want to stop. I was so thrilled with the experience of being able to read that I didn't want it to end, and I was afraid it might if I quit reading!

When night came and it was time for lights out, I took my books and went to the furnace room, where I could turn the light on and continue reading. When morning came, I returned to the barracks. I was awaiting an assignment for pilot training, and had quite a bit of free time. I continued to read for three days and three nights, and I didn't eat during that time.

On and on I read - first the Doctrine and Covenants, then Inez Smith Davis' *The Story of the Church*. I was reading the Book of Mormon when another wonderful thing happened!

I often thanked the Lord for His blessing, and I became more and more concerned about things that were important to my life. I told God that I really did believe there was a God and always had. But I wanted a testimony to know that this is true, that the Church I was reading about was God's Church.

I was reading Moroni 7, when suddenly the worst fear of my life came upon me. I was engulfed in a dark cloud. It was the worst darkness I have ever felt. I was afraid, and I prayed for God to take away this awful cloud of darkness and fear. Suddenly the darkness and fear were gone, and in their place came the greatest joy I had ever experienced.

The barracks seemed to fade away, and I was looking right out into the sky and space. I looked upward and saw a pillar of light, the brightest light I have ever seen - not as the sun, but pure white. It was about a block away and descending toward me. When the light came nearer, I saw that it was a personage. An angel was moving toward me in the light. He came steadily down until he stood about three feet off the floor in front of me. He put his outstretched hands to my face and smiled a really kind smile. I'll never forget the look on that personage's face.

I was never certain whether the angel spoke audibly - but he might as well have because everything was impressed on my mind as though it were spoken. He impressed this thought: "Now that you have seen an angel, you can surely believe that there is a God." I replied that I could. Then I was given to know that Joseph Smith was a prophet, that all the things I had been reading were true, that this - the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - was the true Church, and that I was given this testimony to help me try to raise my son in the right way.

I had the feeling that there would be more children in our family, that we were to raise them in a God-like way - teaching them about God's Church, teaching them to keep God's commandments and to serve God to the best of their abilities throughout their lives because they would have a work to do.

(Completion of testimony below)



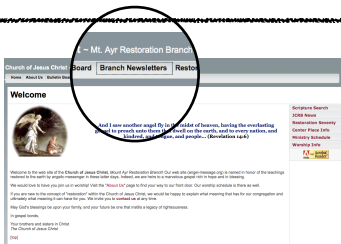
Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

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



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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)

(Continuation of Sherman Phipps Sr.'s testimony from above)

I never lost my ability to read. After the experience, I was able to make great progress in the armed services. Back in civilian life, the ability to read, write and spell made it possible for me to become successful in business and gave my family a much higher standard of living than they could have had otherwise. Through this miraculous blessing my ministry was enhanced - both in the Church and out.

Verily, verily I say unto you, Ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father has in his own hands, and prepared for you; and ye can not bear all things now; nevertheless be of good cheer, for I will lead you along; the kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours; and the riches of eternity are yours; and he who receiveth all things, with thankfulness, shall be made glorious, and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundredfold, yea, more; wherefore do the things which I have commanded you . . . (D & C 77:4a-d)

(Go to gospelrestored.org for the information to zoom either Mount Ayr or Lamoni Restoration Branches' services.)