

Smith Family Devotional
Nauvoo, Illinois – Smith Family Cemetery
Saturday, August 6, 2016

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Elder Ballard:

My grandchildren and Brother and Sister Holzapfel, Karl and I just got through walking along the trail of hope. We stopped at each sign along the way. The children took turns reading the comments that were made by those pioneer forefathers who were driven out of Nauvoo under the circumstances we all understand as family members.

Two things that I would like to leave with you this afternoon. I always have thought how wonderful it was when Joseph left the Sacred Grove, his mother Lucy Mack greeted him and asked him, "Joseph, what is the matter?" He responded, "Nothing, mother. But I have learned for myself that Presbyterianism is not true." What a wonderful thing that transpired between mother Smith and her not yet 15 year old son, Joseph, who just had the remarkable experience of meeting our Heavenly Father and His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. From what I know about our dear Lucy Mack, she chose to believe Joseph. Also, I have thought that after the prophet Moroni had visited with Joseph after teaching him for four years, Joseph joins his father and goes out to work on the family farm. Father Smith knew that there was something wrong and that Joseph was not well. He counsels Joseph to go back home. Joseph tries to climb the fence and falls and Moroni appears to him once again in the light of day and instructs Joseph, "Go tell your father." How grateful we are as a family when Joseph explained his experience with Moroni, Father Smith said, "Go do as the angel has instructed you."

Then I read quite a while ago that Brigham Young said speaking of the prophet Joseph Smith, "He was called to be the prophet of this the dispensation of the fullness of times before the foundations of the world were formed. That our Heavenly Father had His eye on the Smith Family from the very beginning of time. When you read that you start realizing what other family would have gone through all of challenges that Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack Smith went through. Losing the money they had from a dowry from Lucy's father that I think it was a \$1,000, they went into a business venture of some kind and the partner ended up stealing the money. Then they farmed and it doesn't work and they move. Then they farm and it doesn't work and they move. They farm again and it doesn't work. Finally Father Smith makes his way up into Palmyra and finds a piece of ground and determines that this is a good place for them to live.

When we talk about Lucy Mack's determination, I don't know any better example of that than when they hired the coachmen to drive the wagons to come up and meet Father Smith in Palmyra. They stop at an inn and she felt that something wasn't right and comes out and stops the horseman from stealing the wagon, she takes hold of the reins, puts the children in the wagon and makes her way to Palmyra.

Here the Lord has the Smith Family where He needs Joseph to be. We all know his story very well. I have sometimes wondered, "Why did Joseph, Hyrum, Lucy, Joseph Smith Sr. and the rest of the family suffer so much?"

I will tell you what I think. This may be personal because I have experienced some personal suffering in my own life. It's those moments when you are faced with pain or anguish or loss that tests you and draws you closer to the Savior. Perhaps some of what Joseph and Hyrum went through was required for them to better understand the price paid by the Lord Jesus Christ's fulfillment of the atonement for the redemption of all mankind to complete the mission for which they were sent.

It's a tremendous thing brothers and sisters to have the gospel of Jesus Christ in our lives. To have faith and trust in one another. I have always loved the story of Hyrum and Joseph stricken with cholera they were so sick they thought they were going to die. Hyrum leaps to his feet and says Joseph we'll be alright. I saw mother praying for us under an apple tree. This gave them the strength to rise up and carry on their mission.

So it is with each one of us. I do not know what your problems are. I will be very surprised if you don't experience difficult times as you try to get through this life. It was not intended for any of us to come here and not be tested. We will be tested in many ways. We will be tested in our faith, in our trust in God, we will be tested on whether we will serve Him and keep His commandments. We'd be tested on our focus of what really matters most in life. It is so easy to get side tracked and move in directions in life that dull our sensitivity to the things of the spirit. I would counsel and pray that would not happen to any of us here this afternoon.

I would like to share a personal experience that occurred years ago when I was a General Authority a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. A young man in our ward his mother had passed away with cancer. This boy was 18. He loved and adored his mother. They had a tremendous relationship. In the process of that he lost his way. I went after him for several months before I finally got him to come to lunch with me at the church office building. As we had lunch, nine of the twelve were in the lunch room that day so they came over and tousle my young friend's hair asking him, "When you going on a mission?" This was the least thing on his mind.

When we were leaving President Kimball greeted us when he walked past us. As we went through the doors into the parking lot this young man turned to me and he said, "Would President Kimball ever talk to someone like me?" I said, "I don't know. Let me go find out." I picked up the phone and in those days Arthur Haycock was the president's secretary and I explained briefly what the situation was and asked if President Kimball would give us just a few minutes. In his gracious loveable way the President agreed to let us come to his office.

He put my struggling young friend knee to knee and I was off to the side. He looked at him and said the following, "My boy, your mother is all right. Now we need to talk about you." Then he said, "You know difficulties and challenges in life are hard. I didn't like the thought of having my throat operated on in New York and losing part of my voice. Then he proceeded to tell him of several physical ailments that he had suffered. Those things aren't pleasant. Then he put his hand on the knee of this young man and said, "But, my boy, in our suffering we come to know God."

When we left I put my arm around this young man and said, "Don't go back to work. Go home. Ponder and think about what has happened. You met nine members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, you have been talked to by the President of the church. You go home and think about what has happened to you in the last hour," which he did.

He wasn't home long before he called a neighbor friend. She went over and he asked her to help him understand what's happening to me. Then he repeated what I just said to you. All of the sudden his pain and his loss was substituted for a desire to serve a mission and to do things necessary to be worthy of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did serve a mission. He did marry in the temple.

The one thing that stuck in his heart and his mind as it did mine, it has been with me all these years, was President Kimball with his hand on the knee of this young man and looking him in the eye and saying, "Through my suffering I have come to know God."

May the Lord bless you whatever the burden may be that you are carrying. Whatever the challenges are within your family, your extended family, may Heavenly Father grant you the spiritual insight, the spiritual strength, and the spiritual courage to go through your trials and come away knowing that you can also say, "I have come to know God."

This does not mean you have a personal interview face to face with our Heavenly Father to know Him. Your heart tells you that you know him. Your heart tells you that you know the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hearts pound within our chest when we are doing what's right and it sinks when we do what is wrong.

May the Lord watch over us and bless us as a family. May your burdens be lightened. May your love for the Lord Jesus Christ be increased. May your affection for the prophet Joseph Smith, for Hyrum, and all the rest of the family be increased.

It's a wonderful thing for families to get together on circumstances such as this because we rub shoulders and we lift each other and encourage one another along the way.

So when you think about what the greatest blessings are that you will carry from this life to the next life. It will be your family relationships, it will be those whose lives you have touched, those that you have helped lift a burden, teach a truth, bring about the capacity to repent and change and be better. All of your efforts for building and having resources in mortality don't go with you. Family and friends and testimony and service and light of the gospel and reaching out to others, will be with you through the eternities.

May God bless you my beloved brothers and sisters. That the gospel will be something that you will enjoy within the walls of your own home. There will be a great chorus of thank yous for each one of us when that day comes to pass from this mortal experience to the next world of the spirit. I am grateful to have with me these five beautiful grandchildren. They are just five of forty-three. We have 75 great-grandchildren. I don't want to die and have my grandchildren come to me on the other side and say, "Grandpa, why didn't you tell me."

We love all of you and pray that the Lord will be with you. I leave you my testimony. Jesus Christ is the son of the living God. He is the resurrected Savior and Redeemer of the world. This is His church. All that we have talked about is centered in Him. He raised up Joseph and lifted up Hyrum to know how to support Joseph. Join with me as I bear my testimony you bear yours in your heart of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. The opportunity to repent and change that comes under the glorious gift of the atonement.

This is my humble prayer, blessing, and testimony that I leave with you. I love you. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.