

What to Worry About
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Aloha! To quote a friend from earlier this morning, Ke Akua Ho'omaika'i Oe, which is a Hawaiian blessing of God upon you.

I want to welcome, in particular, those who have been recently baptized and are attending this get-together for the first time. You may have noticed that we tend to have disagreements among one another and hold differing opinions. And that's welcomed. It produces discussions. Discussions can lead to kind of healthy healing and understanding. And one of the reasons why (when the opportunity to speak was presented) I thought it best to have my wife speak first and to speak about the subject that she talked about was because we are an unruly, uncontrolled, free group of people. We have no structure; we have no organization; we have no one in authority—because what *ought* to control the way in which we treat one another and the way in which we conduct ourselves is obedience to God and God alone.

One of the problems with institutional churches or organizations is that once you have established a mechanism for determining control, then it doesn't matter if the person who obtains the position of control is a good man or a bad man, a wise man or a fool. Once they occupy the position, it is the position that commands the respect. It is the position itself that has the ability to say yes or no and to move things forward in a wise or in a foolish way (which is one of the reasons why institutions that can be corrupted are always corrupted—period). The adversary has learned long ago that there's a limited number of tricks that you pull in order to bring about the corruption of institutions. And so when you ordain a new institution... And it doesn't matter what it is! It can be founded by our Lord Jesus Christ, and it will turn, over time, into Catholicism, in which wealthy and perverse and corrupt men cover their sins and gratify their pride and satisfy their vain ambition because they have the position in which to do it, and they can point back to the founder who is Jesus Christ who gave authority to Peter, and they hold the keys of Peter, and therefore, what they do ought to sway you, ought to control you. Wars get fought; people get executed. And so the adversary rules with blood and horror, all the while the dialogue focuses upon the position of authority and the legitimacy at the beginning of both Jesus Christ and Peter, his apostle. And so, whenever you stray from your obedience and adherence to the **rule**, you are reminded, “Wait a minute! There is authority, and that authority ought to command respect.”

Aren't these things annoying? [referring to the mic]

Look, we have a restoration that commenced with Joseph Smith, and I doubt anyone would be here today if they didn't think that there was an authentic event that occurred in the life of Joseph Smith, in which the Heavens were opened and a new message was delivered, and through him—by the gift and power of God—came forth a new volume of Scripture, the Book of Mormon. And we all accept that. But so do millions of other people who are not

among us. There are those who have determined that the institution **ordained by the Lord through Joseph Smith** ought to command your fidelity and your loyalty—no matter what course it takes or how it may stray from or pervert the original teachings that were established—because of the legitimacy of Joseph Smith and the institution that he founded. And so today, the “most successful” of the groups controls over a trillion dollars in resources because people accept the narrative that “once an institution is legitimately founded, it doesn't get corrupted.”

Every institution gets corrupted. We lack an institution. And insofar as I hold any influence, I will oppose the establishment of an institution which legitimizes any person to occupy a role of authority and to exert (by their demand or command or insistence) the obedience of others. It is true that there have been revelations given by the Lord and that I've received some of them, and they've been published. I don't consider myself above any of them. Nor do I consider myself to have a greater understanding than any of you who can read the same document as I can. Once it's been received, I have to study it to understand its contents. I don't come with a ready-made ability to dictate anything to anyone. I am just as subordinate to and dictated to by God as any of you. I hold no position of authority. And among us, any voice that can speak up and testify to truth is welcomed. And anyone that has a truth that they can defend and explain—particularly in expounding the Scriptures and bringing new truth to light—is on an equal footing with every other one of us. It has to be so. You have to be individually responsible for understanding and preserving the truth. It has to be part of you—because if it is part of you (and only you), then you stand independent, and the apostasy or the corruption of another man or woman has no effect upon the persistence and the preservation of the truth—because it is in you. In order to create an apostasy, it requires that every single person must individually become corrupted when we all stand on equal footing before God, accountable for our faith, accountable for the truths that we welcome.

If we establish institutional controls, the adversary knows exactly how to compromise that—because it always happens. The Constitution of the United States was established by enlightened men whom God raised up for the very purpose. There was a system of checks and balances because evil, corrupt, and aspiring men always gravitate to positions of control and authority. It's like that light that draws the mosquitoes at night and then electrocutes them. It draws them in; they can't help themselves. And once there, the corruption that attaches destroys the men and the women.

One of the important checks and balances that got established (and I've given a talk about this down in Utah County years ago called “Constitutional Apostasy”) was a system in which the senators of the various states were not elected directly by the people; they were chosen by the legislatures of the respective states. You didn't get to vote for a senator; you got to vote for the state legislature, and then the state legislature selected and sent someone to the Senate. Can you imagine how differently the migration of power, taxes, and authority would have happened in the United States if the United States Senate was subordinate to the legislators of the various states? None of what you see going on in the aggregation of federal authority would have been approved in a United States Senate that was subordinate to the various legislatures. And so as soon as you changed (by an amendment to the

Constitution) one of the checks and balances that had been set up by the founding fathers, you immediately launched the United States into a different direction, and you have subtracted a terribly meaningful check and balance on federal power and authority.

Small thing, grave consequences, and we're suffering under that even today. These are the kinds of small means that get employed by the adversary to corrupt institutions, to detract from our freedoms, from giving us the opportunity to preserve faith intact, and for being able to preserve truth—small things.

At the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his co-president, Hyrum Smith (whom Joseph had identified as THE possessor of Priesthood and Patriarch, upon whom the keys of the ability to ask and get answers had been conferred) upon their death, immediately a change was made. Whereas before there was never any occasion in which a member of the Quorum of the Twelve got asked to be a member of the First Presidency, upon the death of those two, the only ones that ever thereafter occupied a position in the First Presidency had to also occupy a position in the Quorum of the Twelve. And so the check and the balance of having quorums “equal in authority” got corrupted immediately, and we see the legacy of what happens thereafter.

It's very easy to corrupt men. Vain and ambitious desires, lustful and covetous attitudes, they're resident in every person in embryo, and the adversary knows how to excite that into corruption. When Joseph Smith was confined to Liberty Jail and he had nearly half a year, finally, to be out of the frenzy of the daily life, Joseph Smith wrote from Liberty Jail about destroying the ability of priesthood to claim it occupied positions of authority when he wrote, *...no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood* (T&C 139:6).

In the Joseph Smith translation of the book of Genesis describing the power in the gifts that were exercised by Enoch, they were exercised by faith in advance of the time in which he got ordained. All of the powers and the gifts of faith are available to every one of you—men and women—without regard to whether or not you hold priesthood or authority. You want to demonstrate the gifts of the Spirit? You don't have to have ordination in order to do so.

Well, from time to time I look into and read the nonsense that gets written about us. And one of the great curiosities that people have (and it's a matter of conjecture and speculation on—what is that?—Wiki and MormonWiki online when they're trying to describe what it is we're up to and who it is that we are) is conjecture about our numbers. Well, I got news for you: I don't have any idea how many people there are that have been baptized. I've heard that there are a number of people who were recently baptized and some of them will be here today. I understand that baptisms take place with some regularity in very far-flung places. I understand there's a website through which people can request baptism and that there are those who travel in order to perform the ordinance in far-flung places where there isn't someone already present able to perform the ordinance. But I don't know what the numbers are. Probably the only one who does is Keith Henderson—and I've never asked him, and I don't ask, and he doesn't tell—because he conducts the Recorder's Clearinghouse.

But I happen to know from fairly good authority that there are many people who have been baptized and who are awaiting turning in their paperwork to the Recorder's Clearinghouse until after their retirement from employment by the LDS Church or one of its various institutions—because they're afraid if that were to become an issue for them, they'd lose their employment. And much of the employment that happens in the LDS Church is based upon the possession of a temple recommend, and if they knew that someone had been rebaptized, they would deny him the temple recommend, and that would be that.

So even the Recorder's Clearinghouse numbers, however many that may show, there are others in addition. And I'm just not interested in that because the numbers don't matter. People who are interested in aggregation and numbers and quantities and... They miss the point. They miss the point entirely of what it is that is happening and its importance. The numbers do not matter. It isn't about how many there are. It's about how closely *even a few* can become to what it is the Lord wants us to become.

Look, there's an incident—it's referred to in the Teachings and Commandments 54, or excuse me, 154 where this incident is reported:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing...

So Adam called them together to give them his last blessing.

And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the Prince, the Archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and [he] said unto him, I have set you to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of you, and you are a prince over them for ever.

And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation, and notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the holy ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. These things were all written in the Book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time.

Now this same priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also — or in other words, at the end of the world, the final dispensation will restore again the pattern of the first, or Adam's, dispensation. (T&C 154:19-21, emphasis as in original)

That promise is also something that we find in Genesis chapter three. Let me go to [paragraph] 13:

Thus the gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the holy ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam by a holy ordinance, and the gospel preached, and a decree sent forth that it should be in the world until the end thereof. And thus it was. Amen.

And Adam listened [un]to the voice of God and called upon his sons to repent. And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son, and he called his name Seth. And Adam glorified the name of God, for he said, God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew. And God revealed himself unto Seth, and he rebelled not, but offered an acceptable sacrifice like unto his brother Abel. And to him also was born a son, and he called his name Enos. And then began these men to call upon the name of the Lord, ...the Lord blessed them. And a book of remembrance was kept, in which was recorded in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration. And by them their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled. Now this same priesthood which was in the beginning shall be in the end of the world also. (Genesis 3:13-14 RE)

So what is it about that priesthood that from these verses we can count on? Well, for one, there is a list of seven high priests who are named (who gathered with Adam in the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman) to whom the Lord appeared.

If you go through the chronology in Genesis, what you realize is that the children of Adam and Eve fell almost immediately into apostasy. There were generations born, none of whom accepted the gospel being taught by Father Adam and Mother Eve—generations!—until at last, Eve's optimism was raised because of Cain. And she thought, "Now, at last, finally, we've got someone who will follow and obey the Lord." After generations! And yet, the one whom she had hope in murdered his brother, and so there had to be born yet another descendant to Adam and Eve: Seth, whose name we just encountered.

And so Father Adam and Mother Eve are bearing children for generations. And their posterity are marrying (we're told in Genesis) two-by-two; they marry, and they duplicate the family unit, and they have children. And so generations exist now. (And they lived a long time, and they bore children for generation after generation.) And now we get three years previous to Adam's death (something over 960 years), and you have seven high priests and then a handful that are called "the residue."

This same priesthood, which was in the beginning, is going to return in the end. What the world fails to recognize is that you don't need 16½ million people to accomplish and fulfill the promises and the prophecies. When Jesus Christ came in the meridian of time and He taught people, the biggest number that is ever mentioned in the New Testament is mentioned in an epistle by the apostle Paul at the time that the Lord ascended into Heaven from the Mount of Olives: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here looking up? That same Lord shall in like manner return" (see Acts 1:3 RE). Two angels came by and spoke to them that were watching, and Paul enumerates, "How many were there?" Maybe five hundred is what Paul says the Lord Jesus Christ was able to convince to have faith **after** His resurrection and **after** He had spent some 40 days as a resurrected personage appearing in and around Jerusalem and ministering to disciples. Five hundred. What difference do the estimates of the numbers of people make? If that same priesthood which was in the beginning shall in the end of the world be also and if our Lord managed only with proof of His resurrection to get 500, what difference do the numbers make? It's not the numbers that matter.

I'll tell you what matters:

And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying, It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart — only according to the portion of his word which he do[th] grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him...

Okay, heed and diligence unto the Lord—that matters.

...therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the Devil and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 9:3 RE)

The Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith right now is bound firmly in the chains of hell everywhere, excepting among this group (and including this group, to the extent that we fail to give heed and diligence to the Lord)! The only thing that matters isn't the numbers. What matters is the heed and the diligence given by some few unto the Lord, so that the mysteries of God may increase in them until they know the mysteries of God in full.

Take a look around at what you see in the various claimants to be inspired leaders of the various denominations that reckoned from Joseph Smith as a founder, and you will see such profound ignorance, such darkness, that the only way to describe it is as the chains of hell. They know nothing concerning the mysteries of God. “We don't know about that. I don't know that we teach that,” to quote Gordon B. Hinckley. They reject and they march away in their pride and their arrogance, all the while claiming that they're possessors of keys—and because they have keys, you better watch out, you better not cry, you better be good, and I'm telling you why. Nelson, the Destroyer.

Therefore, he [and this is talking about God—he] sent angels to converse with them, who caused men to behold...his glory. And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore, God conversed with men and made known unto them the plan of redemption which had been prepared from the foundation of the world. And this he made known unto them according to their faith, and repentance, and their holy works. (Ibid. ¶7)

That's what matters: faith, repentance, and holy works. Those are the things that bring about the results that God is trying to achieve in restoring things in the last days so that that which was here in the beginning may return again in the last days to the earth. Angels come, and they converse with men. That results in teachings that are inspired and true. That allows people to comprehend a plan for their salvation, which in turn results in them repenting and being able to accomplish holy works.

There are holy works that are being accomplished and have been accomplished among the people that we are part of, that we're privileged to participate in. Among other things, the Scriptures have been recovered in a way that they have not been available to mankind for...

Well, ever since the time that the Lord was here in the New Testament (which itself got corrupted shortly thereafter by a great and abominable church). We've recovered Scriptures; we've presented them to the Lord; we've asked that He accept them. The Lord has made some changes to the Scriptures and told us to alter or add things or eliminate things from the text, and then having done so, all of what He said was gathered together and printed in a bound volume of Scriptures. That involved the efforts of many people over several years with a great deal of effort (primarily a research effort). But in the end, it was something that required God's own voice in order to finish the task up. And God determined that He would speak unto us, and we heard and recorded His voice. And we have Scriptures as a consequence of that.

Right now, there is an ongoing effort: I'm privileged to meet with the effort/those involved every week over Zoom, with people from all over the world—scholars and people of unquestioned capacity and ability to take the Book of Mormon and to translate it back into the language that would have been used about 600 years before Christ in the Hebrew tongue of that day. It's an extraordinarily arduous task. And the words that get used have to be attested to by existing Old Testament Hebrew texts. There are several translations of the Book of Mormon (either in whole or in part) into Hebrew, but they use modern-Hebrew language. And there isn't a rabbi who's serious about understanding the words of God who would respect those forms of the translation of the Book of Mormon as something that is authoritative and attested to. That effort has been going on for several years, and it's now in its final editing process. But it will eventually result in the rolling forth of yet another holy work (not being accomplished through institutions that prize their riches and who've entered into treaties in order to secure the ability to build part of a BYU campus extension on the Mount of Olives in Israel; they've signed a treaty with the nation of Israel guaranteeing that they will not proselytize—in absolute contradiction to the obligation imposed upon us in the Book of Mormon to take the message of the Book of Mormon to the remnant of the Jews—because they value their presence in Israel). And so the work is left to us. And so we've undertaken yet another holy work.

There are other things afoot that will, in due time, roll forth in order to fulfill the promises and the commitments made by God. Because it doesn't matter how few of us there are. What matters is the holiness of the work that we are accomplishing.

There's a scripture that I read a while ago, that is a little more directly related to the subject of this conference than what I've been saying so far. But all things matter. So... It's from Ezekiel; in the Restoration Edition, it's Ezekiel 18:10.

Thus says the Lord God: In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities have become fortified and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places and plant that which was desolate. I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.

There's a lot of excitement about the idea that there's global warming going on and that we need to take some fairly dramatic steps to cure a problem. A problem may exist, but all of the solutions only make the problem worse and have nothing to do with actually fixing what's wrong. It's so extraordinarily wrongheaded. It's like, oh, someone has leprosy at a time when we have no cure or treatment for it and telling him, "Quick, quick, go bathe in the city's drinking water, so that, you know, we can solve your leprosy problem." It's a nonsensical solution there.

I would commend you to just go to YouTube, and search videos on YouTube about reclaiming desert land in some of the absolute worst places/most arid places on Earth. They have gone and done things to get nature to respond to cultivation and to plant life. In some cases, it's by running herd animals over the ground, like nature used to do in the Great Plains of the United States, where the grasslands of the United States were far and wide because the grazing herds would come through. They would graze; they wouldn't necessarily digest all of the seeds; it would come out in the waste product of the animals, and their hooves would penetrate the ground to plant the seeds. And the next time it rained, the grass would regrow, and the roots would shoot down, and anytime moisture came through, the plants would attract it and hold it and invest it back into the earth. And extraordinarily arid places have been reclaimed simply by mimicking what nature wants to do.

There's a fellow—he's a religious fellow, and he's created a camp in Texas. He bought a completely arid, dry piece of ground on which he intended to develop a camp, and there was nothing out there but weeds and dirt and, I think, a mesquite tree or two. And he thought, "Well, the way to solve my problem is to drill a well." They began drilling the well, and as it got to the underground caverns in the limestone, the drilling rig would drop 40 feet in an empty cavern because there was nothing down there. And they drilled on and on, and the solution to the problem never came from drilling wells. The solution to his problem came from planting weeds that grew grasses (what we would consider weeds), grasses that grew high that captured and invested into the soil, and he refilled the aquifer—he refilled those limestone caverns—with water. And on the surface of his property today, he has a lake and a stream that runs off of his property and trees and vegetation, and it looks like Ezekiel described: whereas before it was desolate and barren, afterwards there are literally pools of living water that broke forth on the ground.

Which reminds me of something we have in the Teachings and Commandments in 58, beginning at paragraph three, about the middle:

And he shall utter his voice out of Zion and he shall speak from Jerusalem, and his voice shall be heard among all people...it should be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found. He shall command the great deep, ...it shall be driven back into the north countries and the islands shall become one land, and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided. And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people... [He] shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear

His voice and shall no longer stay themselves, and they shall smite the rocks, and...ice shall flow down at their presence, and a highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, and in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants, ...the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence.

Well, those things occur as a consequence of natural events. And the Earth longs to be able to have those events begin to take place. Look at the words of the covenant that the Lord offered to us:

I, the Lord your God, will be with you and never forsake you, and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.

I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me.

The Earth will yield its increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because [of] the fear of the Lord will be with you.

I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for you all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven.

...You should be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest. (T&C 158:12-17)

Well, the Earth wants to yield her increase. There's a lamentation recorded by Enoch, right before the flood, where the Earth herself spoke up and lamented the wickedness of men upon her face and wanted to know when the season would finally come that she could rest and that righteousness would return to her face.

There's a saying about how sensitive horses are that they can feel when a fly lands on them. And they can make their skin shake, and they can shoo the fly with their tail because they can feel something as light as the presence of a fly that lands on them. Do you think from the account that is given by Enoch of the Earth's lamentation that the Earth itself is any less sensitive about the wickedness that exists upon her face than a horse is sensitive to the presence of a fly upon her skin? If the Earth senses the presence of righteousness again upon her face, do you think it matters that there's only seven of them? That there's only 500 of them? That there's only a diminutive number? I mean, how many people heard the Lord in any given sermon that He taught, even the Sermon on the Mount? Were there as many people that heard Him on that occasion as are here today? Perhaps not. I mean, they didn't have folding chairs; they didn't have fixed chairs. How many people can you gather without

a microphone? Without the ability to project a sound? How many people heard the sound of the Lord? It is perhaps the largest number of people that ever heard Christ speak at the gathering in Bountiful, when approximately 2500 people saw the risen Lord and had Him minister to them. Can you imagine that? That the Lord spent His entire ministry preaching and teaching to a comparatively small group of people that was dwarfed by the number of people he was able to address in the resurrection when He visited in Bountiful?

Well, I would not be troubled about the numbers. I would be troubled about the degree to which we progress and regress. The reason why my wife stood up first to talk to you is because there's a great deal in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant and in the most recent instruction that we got that refers us back to the Answer to Prayer for Covenant and the Covenant itself that suggests that we need to figure out how to deal with one another in a meaningful way, how to deal with the fact that we have differences—because we do and we will, and there is always going to be some reason why the particular group of irritants coming from that man or woman is just setting your teeth on edge. It's just always gonna be the case. So why not ask (as Stephanie had suggested) in response to that, not what's up with them? But instead, what's up with ME? Why does that person set me off? Very often, the reason why that person sets you off is because you project onto them the very, very irritating things that you possess or do or exhibit.

We're not supposed to talk about politics, according to my wife, but I'm gonna talk about politics. Right now there's a group/there's a political party in possession of the Presidency, the Senate, the House (everything, probably, except the Supreme Court at the moment). And constantly, there's the drumbeat that says their politically-weak, out-of-office, minority political opponents are fascists! "They're fascists! They're trying to destroy democracy! They're fascists!" And yet, under the umbrella of that particular political view, someone with a gun went to the congressional softball game and shot Congressman Scalise precisely because he opposed his political views. Billions of dollars of damage were done in the name of that political party's desire to see certain political changes take place all across the country. And recently, someone was run over in North Dakota by someone who says that he feared an 18-year-old potential fascist.

Now, I'm not saying that Republicans are good and that Democrats are evil. They're all evil. They're all corrupt. There was a time when the other political party that's currently out of office had the Presidency, had the Senate, had the House of Representatives, and I think they, at that time, even had the Supreme Court. And they didn't solve any of the political problems that existed then because they still exist now—because we're all so stupid that, as long as the political issue gets preserved, they can say, "We stand for this," and you'll donate money to them and say, "Oh, good. I agree with that. They don't want 'this,'" whatever "this" is! I don't care if it's illegal immigration. I don't care if it's women's rights. I don't care if it's abortion. I don't care if it's strong military. I don't care if it's intervening in foreign wars. It doesn't matter what the political issue is. They feed on exciting you into upset and anger so that you'll part with your pocketbook and give them money. Do you really think that what the Republicans have to offer or what the Democrats have to offer are going to make your life better? Do you really think that electing an egomaniacal strongman will fix electing a doubting, doddering old fool? Do you think we fix problems that way?

We fix our own problems by giving heed and diligence to God and by gaining in light and truth and in comprehending the mysteries of God. Like the horse can shrug off the fly, the Earth herself can shrug off the unrighteous in order to protect even a small group of those who are God's (*God's*=possessive, apostrophe "s," belonging to Him). We need to live our lives individually so that the Earth recognizes us as someone whose feet are beautiful upon the mountains and who are welcomed upon the Earth because we delight her by serving that same God who organized her, who—in response to His voice—organized herself into the planet, and when He spoke, it caused the dry land to appear. She responded to Him. She was created and organized by Him. She was populated with vegetation and animal life...largely by His consort. But this Earth knows the difference between righteousness and wickedness—and it doesn't matter how many or how few. It only matters how much light and truth we have among us.

Don't be hasty to think that you know more than you do. Don't be hasty to reach a conclusion and defend a proposition when... I can't tell you how often I've studied a matter through at some considerable length, carefully parsing the Scriptures to come up with what I believe to be the right answer, and then, having prepared myself to understand the answer, taking my conclusion before the Lord, only to be corrected because I did not see and I did not understand. We have to be willing to be corrected—not because we stick our nose into one another's business but because we hear light and truth, and we accept it as such. It tastes good; it feels good. But even then, it's possible that what we're tasting, feeling, hearing, and comprehending is only an introduction to the greater truths that come thereafter.

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God...until they know them in full (Alma 9:3 RE). Well, that "until" process **can take some time**. I would imagine that even if the Heavens were opened to you and you could behold, as Joseph said, for five minutes the opening of the Heavens, that it would yet be many years before what was revealed to you would be comprehended.

When Nephi recorded his initial impressions upon the revelation that he received when he was trying to understand what his father was teaching him, he would later, then, etch those into the large plates of Nephi. And then, decades later, he got the command to create the small plates of Nephi. It's at least three decades—it could be four decades—between when the events occurred with the revelation that Nephi received before they migrated across the Arabian Peninsula and when he etched them into the small plates of Nephi. And when he does that, he says, *...my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard* (2 Nephi 3:6 RE). "Pondereth continually." Four decades! And what tumbles out of that effort are the small plates of Nephi, which were never abridged by Mormon; we get them in an unabridged, unreformed, unprocessed form, directly from the translation of the small plates of Nephi, in order to replace the lost 116 pages. And these are what Nephi says are the sacred teachings. These are the lessons he wants you to learn.

A few days ago when meeting with the translation team (the Hebrew translation team), I explained to them that what Nephi did in his book was to take and substitute Isaiah text as his—Nephi's—testimony about what he—Nephi—saw because he was commanded by the Lord that he shall not write it. But as soon as he's commanded not to write it, he's given the

big hint that others have seen and written it. So Nephi, then, given the restriction that he's not supposed to write it, takes and substitutes the language of Isaiah, but it is his—Nephi's—testimony. And as he progresses through his testimony, he then gives a transition chapter and then an interpretive key. In the transition chapter, he stops quoting Isaiah and begins to paraphrase him, and then he gives you an interpretive key saying, "This is what all of that stuff I just gave you means," because it's a decidedly American-oriented prophecy about Nephi's vision for the Americas. And then he wraps his plates up (his testimony up), and he hands it to his brother, Jacob, who does exactly the same thing as his brother had done. He tells the people, "Come to the temple tomorrow, and I'm gonna give to you a prophecy." And the people come to the temple tomorrow, and he reads an allegory for Zenos. And after reading it, he says to the people, "I told you I was going to prophesy to you today. And so, here's my prophecy: What I just read you from Zenos, it's all true." So, you've got Nephi using Isaiah to bear his testimony about the things he's seen and heard. You've got Jacob, who's been in the presence of the Lord, bearing testimony and prophecy by quoting the words of Zenos.

What we don't have available to us are the brass plates on which a more extensive version of the Old Testament had been recorded. We have Mormon abridging content and putting it together through the rest of the Book of Mormon. I would suggest that the pattern that was established by Nephi and followed by Jacob is the pattern that got followed in all of the Book of Mormon and that what we're getting throughout the remainder of the Book of Mormon are extensive passages from the brass plates incorporated into the account, the teachings, and the testimony that has been preserved as the Book of Mormon. I think if we had a copy of the brass plates and we could compare them with the text that Mormon abridged, that we would all be shocked by the amount of content that reckons from the brass plates. I think there is so much of that into the balance of the record that we have in the Book of Mormon that there's practically nothing of value left in those plates that we haven't already got in the Book of Mormon itself.

So why would someone who gazed into Heaven for five minutes spend time teaching using Isaiah or teaching using Zenos or teaching using quotes from Scripture in order to get the message across? Well, if it's been said by someone else in a way that is sufficient to teach the precept, it's rather like what Christ taught about the rich man who dies and goes to Sheol who, lifting up his eyes, being in torment, sees Lazarus, and asks him, "Hey, go deliver a message to my brothers. Warn them about this." And the parable the Lord taught was, "Hey, they've got Moses and the prophets. If they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they wouldn't believe, though one should return from the dead," making a prophetic comment about those that were rejecting Himself.

The Scriptures are in front of us. But just like civil violence is described in current political vocabulary as "reasonable dissent" and just like competing viewpoints are denounced and censored on college campuses today because *words* are called "violence," it is possible for us to take the words of Scripture and to use the words of Scripture in order to justify our own pride and vanity and insecurity, vain ambition, and desire to control and subjugate.

It isn't the words of Scripture that are gonna get us where we need to get. It's gonna require something more and maybe a lot more of what my wife talked about before I got up here

than what I'm talking about now that I'm up here. Because we really do need to listen to one another and to hear and to put ourselves into someone else's shoes. And instead of being triggered, ask ourselves, "Why? Why do I want to react in that way? Why do I want to behave in that unbecoming way? Why do I want to attribute ill-motive? Maybe the problem lies within myself, as opposed to within what I'm finding to be so irritating that I can't keep silent anymore! I must speak up..." with little regard to how ugly our reactions are, with little regard to how unbecoming we can be in our self-righteousness.

You know, we do have an obligation to take care of the children. We do have an obligation—like that latest comment from the Lord suggests—to be careful about taking vulnerable people and exposing them to things that are unbecoming. I don't know if you've seen the pictures of that high school shop teacher with the prosthetic boobs that look like he's gonna lose them in a table saw if he's... I don't know how you can be a shop teacher and be doing that. There's some behavior that is so outrageous and so sexually deviant that, just a little while ago, it would have landed the person in jail. And today it's being defended as an expression of freedom and a desire to overcome the patriarchy. It's just nonsense. There's so much abuse of children going on in the communities of the United States right now that parades itself as a virtue and gets clothed in the language of virtue, that we ought to look at that and think for ourselves that sometimes we too use the language of virtue to describe and conceal what's really going on inside ourselves.

None of us are that good. None of us. But the Lord is forgiving and kind, willing to correct, willing to forgive, and eager for us to *catch on* to what happens when we give heed and diligence. We can't make someone else give heed. We can't browbeat someone else into diligence. That can't happen! The heed that must be given and the diligence that must be shown is internal to *yourself* and internal to *myself*. And I know there are times when I'm anything but giving the kind of heed and diligence that ought to be given, even to a kindly and forgiving Lord.

Well, I'm gonna close, because we're destined to get out of here by two o'clock, and I think there's something like a closing "something or other." And at my wife's insistence, I'm not gonna take questions. She thinks more often than not, I do something foolish when responding spontaneously.

But I don't want to end without saying that the thoughts that have been gathered today I consider to be as important as anything I've ever said and worthy of saying in the name of Jesus Christ, Mahalo.

[Transcription v1.1]