

"Hope in Christ"
Cooper Mt Sacrament Meeting
Mike Baird – April 8, 2007 (Easter)

Introduction

- My opportunity
 - Share my understanding, feelings and testimony about Christ, His resurrection, His atonement, its transcendent beauty
 - Share my joy and rejoicing
 - Day of celebration
 - Sky half sunny kind of person
- My desire
 - You may know through the witness of the Spirit that what I shall speak of is true
 - You may know that I know it is true
 - You may feel of my love of the Atonement that you too may feel what I feel
- Speak about the Christ's atonement in the context of hope
- Joseph B Wirthlin
"Each of us will have ... those days when the universe itself seems shattered and the shards of our world lie littered about us in pieces. We all will experience those broken times when it seems we can never be put together again. " ("Sunday Will Come," *Ensign*, Nov 2006, 28–30)
 - We may feel this way because of sin
 - We may feel this way because of the loss of a loved one
 - We may feel this way because we don't feel that we can measure up and perhaps never can measure up
 - We may feel this way because we have been wronged most horribly
 - We may feel this way because of hurtful words of another
 - We may feel this way because of tragedy
 - Perhaps we contemplate our future and wonder if things might ever be better

- 2 Nephi 9:6-9 (Jacob)
 - "6)... the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord.
 - 7)... the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.
 - 8) O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.
 - 9) And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself;"
- As we contemplate these words of the prophet Jacob it paints a situation requiring hope
- Or if we as Elder Wirthlin says "experience those broken times when it seems we can never be put together again" we need hope
- Moroni 7:40-41
 - "And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. ... And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal"
- Our Hope is in the power of the Atonement to change our lives, to resurrect us and to lift us up to eternal life

What hope is it that the atonement provides?

- Many gifts both unconditional and conditional that provide hope
- I will talk of 5 gifts of the atonement that provide us hope

1st gift: Repentance - Atonement for overcoming sin

- Russel M Nelson

"Letter: The guilt and failure I feel make it almost impossible for me to repent. I am losing my faith. The sins were first; the doubts followed. The order is important because sin needed doubt. When I doubted my faith, sins lost their meaning and guilt its bite. Doubting began, then, as a means of anesthesia. It served to diminish the guilt that was literally tearing me apart. Before long, however, the doubts thrived independent of the needs that conceived them. My painful indecisiveness, my tentativeness, my lack of direction, my paralysis of volition, my poverty of confidence have caused suffering and depression. My family, my future, and my faith are at stake. I am losing hope." ("A More Excellent Hope," Ensign, Feb 1997, 60)

- I have had similar words expressed to me, those whom sin was strangling out hope
- Isaiah 1:18
"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool "
- Isaiah 53:5
" But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed"
- Alma 7:11-12 (Alma)
"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; "
- We become pardoned
- We are cleansed
- One of the most beautiful things I have felt personally and that I have ever witnessed is the turning away from the darkness and despair of sin to that light and joy that Alma described in these words:
- Alma 36:20-21
"And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain! Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were

my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy"

2nd gift: Resurrection through the power of the Atonement

- An inescapable fact is that we all will die
 - Loved ones, friends and so forth
 - I can not imagine contemplating death without the hope provided by Christ's resurrection
- Paul put it this way:
 - 1 Cor 15:21-22
 - "For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:
And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.
If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"
- Spencer W Kimball
 - " But today is just a grain of sand in the Sahara of eternity. We have also a hope in Christ for the eternity that lies ahead; otherwise, as Paul said, we would be "of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19).
How great would be our sorrow—and justly so—if there were no resurrection! How miserable we would be if there were no hope of life eternal! If our hope of salvation and eternal reward should fade away, we would certainly be more miserable than those who never had such an expectancy. " ("An Eternal Hope in Christ," Ensign, Nov 1978, 71)
- Resurrection is a free gift to all
- Many prophets have spoken about the gift of the resurrection:
 - 1 Cor 15:22 (Paul speaking about resurrection)
 - "For as in Adam all die, *even so in Christ shall all be made alive*"
 - 2 Nephi 9:10,12 (Jacob)
 - 10) *O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit....*
 - 12) ...and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel.
- Through the power of the resurrection we can have hope:
 - That we shall live again after we die
 - That we can be reunited with God & loved ones

- TESTIFY

3rd gift: Atonement redeems those who are not accountable

- Part of our blood typing is what is called the RH factor. It is either positive (85% people) or negative.
- Rh-negative pregnant mother can make antibodies (part of her immune system's response to invaders) against Rh-positive blood cells, even against those of her own baby. This is called Rh sensitization. These antibodies have the potential to cross the placenta and attack the fetus' red blood cells, which in turn can cause low blood count (anemia), congestive heart failure, and even fetal death. 1968 medicine was developed to prevent this sensitization.
- Tragically - Linda, Betty Jean & Barbara Baird
- Yet in spite of this tragedy there is hope – not only in the resurrection but..
- For those who live and die without Gospel law, understanding or accountability, the Savior's atonement extends mercy unconditionally and the demands of justice are met.
 - Children who die before the age of accountability (Moroni 8:8,11,22) which by revelation is the age of 8
 - Where no law is given (2 Nephi 9:25)
 - Sinned in ignorance (Mosiah 3:11)
 - Those of mental capacity such that they can not understand (D&C 29:49-50)
- Through this unconditional extension of mercy we can have hope:
 - Our little children who may have passed away are saved in the kingdom of Heaven
 - Those whom we have known without the mental capacity to understand are saved in the kingdom of heaven
- TESTIFY

4th gift: Overcoming sorrow and pain

- Let me paint picture using the words of Elder Wirthlin again
 - Joseph B Wirthlin
"Each of us will have ... those days when the universe itself seems shattered and the shards of our world lie littered about us in pieces. We all will experience those broken times when it seems we can never be put together again. " ("Sunday Will Come," *Ensign*, Nov 2006, 28–30)
 - Many of us through no choice of our own will have such days and times
 - We may have been wronged most horribly by the actions or words of others
 - We may feel this way because of tragedy where no one is to blame
- President Faust talk related story of the tragedy of the Amish girls (April 1, 2007 Sunday morning session of Conference)
 - 32 year old milk truck driver (non Amish)
 - Killed 5, wounded 5
 - James E Faust
"This shocking violence caused great anguish among the Amish but no anger. There was hurt but no hate. Their forgiveness was immediate. Collectively they began to reach out to the milkman's suffering family. As the milkman's family gathered in his home the day after the shootings, an Amish neighbor came over, wrapped his arms around the father of the dead gunman, and said, "We will forgive you." Amish leaders visited the milkman's wife and children to extend their sympathy, their forgiveness, their help, and their love. About half of the mourners at the milkman's funeral were Amish. In turn, the Amish invited the milkman's family to attend the funeral services of the girls who had been killed. A remarkable peace settled on the Amish as their faith sustained them during this crisis. "
("The Healing power of Forgiveness", April 1, 2007 Sunday morning session of Conference)
 - Ability to forgive – through faith and hope in Christ
 - There is a great power of healing through the Atonement
- I can best relate to the description of these feelings by Isaiah when he describes these feeling as ashes
- Isaiah also prophesied that the Savior, through the atonement would give beauty of ashes
 - Isaiah 61:1-3
". . . to bind up the brokenhearted, . . . to comfort all that mourn;

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes . . ."

- Alma 7:11-12 (Alma)

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

. . . and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."

- Isaiah 53:4

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . ."

- Chieko N. Okazaki

"I recently noticed that a carelessly placed brick had squashed a pansy flat. But part of the pansy was still peeking out from under the edge of the brick; and over the next few weeks, that pansy put its energies into creeping sideways around the edge of the brick, pushing its short shoots into the air and sunlight, and blossoming in its friendly purple and gold. When I moved the brick, the pansy's stem was crooked; but, oh, its flower was as glorious as those next to it.

This pansy chose life. It experienced adversity, but it chose life. It experienced crippling, but it chose life. It could not have been blamed or faulted for giving up under the brick, but it chose life." ("Raised in Hope," *Ensign*, Nov 1996, 89)

- Chieko N. Okazaki

"We can choose to feed the darkness and death in our lives, or we can choose to feed the brightness of hope in our lives. We can worry. We can deny the light. We can refuse to ally ourselves with Jesus Christ, the already triumphant master of life. We can give our lives piece by piece into captivity until we no longer have the power to wrench it away again. We can cooperate with the killing of our spirits and the strangling of our hopes until meaninglessness and despair overcome us. The death of the body is nothing—for Christ's Resurrection guarantees our own—but He cannot rescue us from the death of the spirit unless we choose to ally ourselves with Him, with His hope, with the inexhaustible and irrepressible life that is His" ("Raised in Hope," *Ensign*, Nov 1996, 89)

- TESTIFY

5th gift: Making up the gap (grace) – attaining divine perfection

- There are those of us who despair because we feel caught between the understanding that we must become clean and like Christ to dwell with God again and the complete understanding that no matter how hard we try we will fall short
 - It seems in our everyday lives no matter how hard we try we just aren't good enough
 - Sometimes we beat ourselves up over this
 - Sometimes we are beaten by others to where we believe we are no good
 - We can fall victim to this despair to the point we fall into destructive behaviors
- Or we can look to the Savior and the atonement
- 2 Nephi 25:23
 - "we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do"
 - Understanding is given by Moroni
 - Moroni 10:32
 - "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 (THIS is the "all we can do" that Nephi speaks of, the rest of the verse describes the "by grace we are saved" part), then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ;"
- We no longer need despair – we can look forward with hope, doing these things, doing the very best we can
- TESTIFY

Closing

Spoken of 5 precious gifts of hope through the atonement of Christ

- If we are mired in sin – know we can be white as snow
- If we are facing death or death of loved one – Know will live again
- If we are holding ashes of broken relationships, suffering from tragedy – Know we can receive beauty
- If overwhelmed with falling short – Know His grace is sufficient

- 2 Nephi 9:50-51 (Jacob)
"Come, my brethren, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.
Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Hearken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted . . ."

TESTIFY