

Podcast 121: Precious, Part 1

This is Part 1 of a special series exploring the commandment and need for us to become precious to each other.

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DENVER: I'm sorry—I laugh at myself. I'm not a very good student. I'm embarrassingly oblivious to the obvious. I could tell you stories about that, but you would wonder at the Lord's patience. But, I wanted to know about Joseph and the Restoration, and details about what went on in Nauvoo and what has been going since Nauvoo, where and what and who, and I couldn't get enough questions out on the table. I was *obnoxious*—obnoxiously inquisitive. Nothing about the future, I want to know about the past up until now.

I saw what we were doing, and how apparently important that was, and how the Lord's watching over this.

And then the view expanded, and God's working with people that we won't encounter for some time still, to get them ready for what is coming. And He's surprisingly just as involved in caring for them as He is in attending to us.

Then the view increased another order of magnitude, and I could see *every* people, *everywhere*. And it doesn't matter who they are, where they are, or what their culture is—it doesn't matter where they are in this world—He is working to bring about, ultimately, their salvation as well.

And then it got ridiculous, because He has concerns about creations that are without number. But in trying to put it into words, this is the analogy that I've come up with:

Let's liken Zion to a bus station. And someone needs to build the bus station, and that might be us. And if we build a bus station, and we have a place that can receive people and that is a place of safety where they can pass through, when we finish with that, the bus station won't amount to much if someone doesn't build a bus. And *we're* not building that bus. And the buses that get built are not going to go anywhere if they don't have fuel, and someone's got to do *that*—and that's going to involve miners, and explorers, and manufacturers, and refiners—and transport people; and delivery mechanisms that God is working with. And when they finally *fill* the buses, that will be someone over whom God is responsible.

When they finally get to our bus station, we're not going to be the ones who stand there and say, "Yeah, we built the bus station! We rock!"

Zion is an absolutely critical component in the last days' plan of God and indispensable in the salvation of the souls of men, living and dead, but it's *just* a bus station. And through it will pass concourses of people with whom we've had *very* little responsibility.

When He says that there's going to come a time when the prophets are going to awaken and will no longer stay themselves, and they're going to come from the lands of the north, and they're going to come to the bus station to receive something at the hands of His servants Ephraim, in the boundaries of the everlasting hills, He's working on that. And He's working with people *on* that.

And *we* need to be about what He's asked us to do. And it's important; it's indispensable. But it's absolutely no more indispensable than what He's doing among people in Asia and Europe and Africa, and *everywhere else* in the world. And He promises— You read along in the scriptures, He tells you: After the voice of warning then He's going to preach a sermon, and His sermon is going to *shake* and *cause fear*. And it's not because He's an angry God; it's because He's a loving God who knows what it takes to stir people up, to get attention, to consider the things of eternity.

But that's essentially— It's hard to put into words what— That's the analogy, and I think it conveys the meaning because He is the God of the whole world and *every soul* is precious to Him. And Christ's atonement was intended to yield the absolute greatest benefit that can be obtained through the suffering of the Lord, and for some people *their reluctance is no deterrent* to the Lord's desire to save them then. I think Zion needs to be people that receive the word with gladness, and not people we'd contend with to bring the word. I am *really* interested to see what will happen up in Boise; I think that is going to be an interesting moment.

Today marks a moment when the stirrings that have been underway *for years* result in God's offering to establish *His* people, on earth, by a covenant He ordains. The few ready to receive the Lord's offer today are scattered to the nethermost parts of His vineyard (that's verse 52). (See Jacob 5; see also Jacob 3:23-28 RE.)

Despite this, a live broadcast on the Internet allows *them* to be grafted in at the same moment this is happening in Boise, Idaho. Correspondingly, those who utterly refused to accept the offered covenant are *plucked* from the Restoration's tree of life because they are bitter fruit, unable to meet the Lord's requirements.

The Lord is taking this step to preserve part of humanity, not to destroy it (that's verse 53). A few descendants of the covenant Fathers have the natural gift of faith; that gift belongs to the natural branches (that's verse 54). When grafted, we are connected to the natural roots, or covenant Fathers, as heirs of the promises made to them. Even after the covenant there will still be those who are bitter and wild, who will be unable to produce natural fruit, despite the covenant. These will remain for a time, despite their bitterness (verses 56 and 57). Today only the most bitter, who refuse to be grafted in, will be trimmed away.

We look forward to more *nourishing*, or restoring of truths, lights, and commandments, which will bless those who receive. But for those who will not, the continuing Restoration will prune them away (verse 58). These bitter and wild branches must still be cut off and

cast away. These steps are necessary to preserve the opportunity for the natural fruit to fully return (that's verse 59). The *good* must overcome the *evil*. This takes time, and it means that the Lord's patience is extended to *give* time to develop and further improve.

We are not expected and cannot become natural fruit in a single step. But we are expected to accept the initial graft today. The Lord is taking these steps so that *perhaps* (and that's a deliberate word), *perhaps* we may become natural fruit worthy to be preserved in the coming harvest (that's verse 60). "Perhaps" is the right word. Some who are grafted will still be plucked away and burned, but others will bear natural fruit and be preserved.

Accepting the covenant is not the final step. Our choices will determine whether we are bitter or natural fruit—*that* will decide our fate. Just as the ancient allegory foretold, the covenant makes us servants and laborers in the vineyard (verse 61). We are required to (this is from the covenant), "*Seek to recover the lost sheep remnant of this land and of Israel, and no longer forsake them. Bring them unto [the Lord] and teach them of [His] ways, to walk in them.*" (T&C 158:11 RE.) If we fail to labor to recover them, we break the covenant. We must labor for this last time in the Lord's vineyard.

There *is* an approaching, final pruning of the vineyard (verse 62). The first to be grafted in are Gentiles, so that the last may be first. The lost sheep remnant next, and then Israelites, so that the first may be last (verse 63). But grafting is required for all, even the remnants, because God works with His people through covenant-making.

There will be more grafting and further pruning. As more is revealed, and therefore more is required, some will find the *digging* and *dunging* too much to bear and will fall away; or in other words, will be pruned despite the covenant (that's verse 64). The covenant makes it possible for natural fruit to return. The bad fruit will still continue, even among the covenant people, until there is enough strength in the healthy branches for further pruning.

It requires natural fruit to appear before the final pruning takes place (verse 65). The good and bad will coexist. It will damage the tree to remove the bad at once. Therefore the Lord's patience will continue for some time yet. The rate of removing the bad is dependent wholly upon the rate of the development of the good.

It is the Lord's purpose to create *equality* in his vineyard. In the allegory, equality in the vineyard appears three times—in verses 66, ~~72~~ [73], and 74. We cannot be greater and lesser, nor divide ourselves into a hierarchy to achieve the equality required for Zion. When a group is determined to remain equal (and I am personally determined to be no greater than any other), then it faces challenges that never confront unequal people. A religion of bosses and minions never deals with *any* of the challenges of being equals.

Critics claim we will never succeed because of our determined desire for equality. *None of our critics* can envision what the Lord has said in verses 66, ~~72~~ [73], and 74 about His people. But equality among us is the *only way* prophesied for us to succeed. That does not mean we won't have a mess as we learn *how* to establish equality.

Similarly, Zion cannot be established by isolated and solitary figures proclaiming a “testimony of Jesus” from their home keyboard. The challenge of building a community must be part of a process. Zion is a community, and therefore God is a God of community, and His people must learn to live together with one heart, one mind, with no poor among us. Isolated keyboardists proclaiming their resentment of community can hardly speak temperately of others. How could *they* ever live peacefully in a community of equals?

We must become precious to each other.

Although the laborers in this final effort are few, *you will* be the means used by the Lord to complete His work in His vineyard (verse 70). You're required to labor with your might to finish the Lord's work in His vineyard (verse 72)—but *He* will labor alongside you. *He*, not a man or a committee, will call *you* to do work. When He calls, do not fear—but do not run faster than you have strength. We must find His people in the highways and byways, and invite them to join in. Zion will include people from every part of the world. This conference is broadcast worldwide as part of the prophecy to Enoch that God would send:

Righteousness and truth will [he] cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. (Moses 7:62; see also Genesis 4:22 RE)

We must proclaim this to the world.

Do not despair when further pruning takes place; it must be done. Only through pruning can the Lord keep His tree of life equal, without those who are lofty overcoming the body (verse 73). The lofty branches have *always* destroyed equality to prevent Zion.

The final result of the Lord's labor in His vineyard is declared by the ancient prophet in unmistakable clarity:

*The trees have become again the natural fruit; and they became like unto one body; and the fruits were equal; and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit, which was most precious unto him **from the beginning**.* ([Emphasis added.] Jacob 5:74; see also Jacob 3:27 RE)

Mark those words. (That's verse 74.)

When the Lord explained this to me, I realized how foolish it was to expect “natural fruit,” worthy of preservation, in an instant. The Lord works patiently, methodically, and does not require any to run faster than they have strength. We cannot allow ourselves to be drawn into inequality when the result of this labor is to make us one body, equal with one another. We cannot imitate the failures of the past by establishing a hierarchy, elevating one above another, and forgetting that we must be of one heart, one mind, and no poor among us.

The Restoration was never intended to just restore an ancient Christian church—that is only a halfway point; it must go back further. In the words of the ancient prophet, God intends to do *“according to [His] will; and [to preserve] the natural fruit, that it is good, even like as it was in the beginning”* (verse 75). This means the beginning, as in the days of Adam, with the return of the original religion and original authority. Everything must be returned as it was in the beginning. Civilization began with the temple as the center of learning, law, and culture. The temple was the original “university” because it taught of man's place with God in the universe.

God will return the right of dominion, once held by Adam, to man on earth to make us humble, servant-gardeners laboring to return the world to a peaceful Paradise. The covenant received today restores part of that right. There is a land inheritance given to us as part of the covenant, and therefore if we keep the covenant, we have the right to remain when others will be swept away.

Ultimately, all rights given to us must be turned back to the Fathers who went before, who will likewise return them to Adam, who will surrender them to Christ. When Christ returns, He will come with the right to exercise complete dominion over the earth and exercise judgment over the ungodly.

Things set into motion today are part of preparing the way for the Lord's return in glory.

QUOTING FROM THE ANSWER & COVENANT: I covenanted with Adam at the beginning, which covenant was broken by mankind. Since the days of Adam I have always sought to reestablish people of covenant among the living, and therefore have desired that man should love one another, not begrudgingly, but as brothers and sisters indeed, that I may establish my covenant and provide them with light and truth.

For you to unite I must admonish and instruct you, for my will is to have you love one another. As people you lack the ability to respectfully disagree among one another. You are as Paul and Peter whose disagreements resulted in jarring and sharp contentions. Nevertheless they both loved me and I loved them. You must do better.

I commend your diligent labor, and your desire to repent and recover the scriptures containing the covenant I offer for the last days. For this purpose I caused the Book of Mormon to come forth. I commend those who have participated, as well as those who have offered words of caution, for I weigh the hearts of men and many have intended well, although they have spoken poorly. Wisdom counsels mankind to align their words with their hearts, but mankind refuses to take counsel from Wisdom.

Nevertheless, there have been sharp disputes between you that should have been avoided. I speak these words to reprove you that you may learn, not to upbraid you so that you mourn. I want my people to have understanding.

There is great reason to rejoice because of the work that has been done. There is little reason for any to be angry or to harshly criticize the labor to recover the scriptures, and so my answer to you concerning the scriptures is to guide you in other work to be done hereafter; for recovering the scriptures does not conclude the work to be accomplished by those who will be my people: it is but a beginning.

In your language you use the name Lucifer for an angel who was in authority before God, who rebelled, fought against the work of the Father and was cast down to the earth. His name means *holder of light*, or *light bearer*, for he had gathered light by his heed and diligence before he rebelled. He has become a vessel containing only wrath and seeks to destroy all who will hearken to him. He is now enslaved to his own hatred.

Satan is a title, and means *accuser*, *opponent* and *adversary*; hence once he fell, Lucifer became, or in other words was called, Satan, because he accuses others and opposes the Father. I rebuked Peter and called him Satan because he was wrong in opposing the Father's will for me, and Peter understood and repented.

In the work you have performed there are those who have been Satan, accusing one another, wounding hearts and causing jarring, contention, and strife by their accusations. Rather than loving one another, even among you who desire a good thing, some have dealt unkindly as if they were the opponents, accusers, and adversaries. In this they were wrong.

You have sought to recover the scriptures because you hope to obtain the covenant for my protective hand to be over you, but you cannot be Satan and be mine. If you take upon you my covenant, you must abide it as a people to gain what I promise. You think Satan will be bound a thousand years, and it will be so, but do not understand your own duty to bind that spirit within you so that you give no heed to accuse others. It is not enough to say you love God; you must also love your fellow man. Nor is it enough to say you love your fellow man while you, as Satan, divide, contend, and dispute against any person who labors on an errand seeking to do my will. How you proceed must be as noble as the cause you seek. You have become your own adversaries, and you cannot be Satan and also be mine. Repent, therefore, like Peter and end your unkind and untrue accusations against one another, and make peace. How shall there ever come a thousand years of peace if the people who are mine do not love one another? How shall Satan be bound if there are no people of one heart and one mind?

For the sake of the promises to the Fathers [I will] labor with you as a people, and not because of you, for you have not yet become what you must be to live together in peace. If you will hearken to my words, I will make you my people and my words will give you peace. Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of all my people. Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but also to do as you profess.

The Book of Mormon was given as my covenant for this day and contains my gospel, which came forth to allow people to understand my work and then obtain my salvation. Yet many

of you are like those who reject the Book of Mormon, because you say, but you do not do. As a people you honor with your lips, but your hearts are corrupt, filled with envy and malice, returning evil for good, sparing none, even those with pure hearts among you, from your unjustified accusations and unkind backbiting. You have not obtained the fullness of my salvation because you do not draw near to me.

The Book of Mormon is to convince the gentiles, and a remnant of Lehi, and the Jews, of the truth of the words of my ancient prophets and apostles, with all the records agreeing that I am the Lamb of God, the Son of the Father, and I was sent into the world to do the will of the Father, and I am the Savior of the world. All must come unto me or they cannot be saved. And how do men come unto me? It is by faith, repentance, and baptism, which bring the Holy Ghost to then show you all things you must know.

If the gentiles unto whom the Book of Mormon was given had hearkened unto the Holy Ghost, they would have come unto me in Hyrum and Joseph's day. But they did not hearken, and would not allow me to abide with them in word, and in power, and in very deed.

Hear therefore my words: Repent and bring forth fruit showing repentance, and I will establish my covenant with you and claim you as mine.

It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. And all who abide it, whether on this land or any other land, will be mine and I will watch over them and protect them in the day of harvest, and gather them in as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be my people and I will be your God and the sword will not devour you. And unto those who will receive will more be given until they know the mysteries of God in full.

But remember that without the fruit of repentance, and a broken heart and a contrite spirit, you cannot keep my covenant; for I, your Lord, am meek and lowly of heart. Be like me. You have all been wounded, your hearts pierced through with sorrows because of how the world has treated you. But you have also scarred one another by your unkind treatment of each other, and you do not notice your misconduct toward[s] others because you think yourself justified in this. You bear the scars on your countenances, from the soles of your feet to the head, and every heart is faint. Your visages have been so marred that your hardness, mistrust, suspicions, resentments, fear, jealousies, and anger toward your fellow man bear outward witness of your inner self; you cannot hide it. When I appear to you, instead of confidence you feel shame. You fear and withdraw from me because you bear the blood and sins of your treatment of brothers and sisters. Come to me and I will make sins as scarlet become white as snow, and I will make you stand boldly before me, confident of my love.

I descended below it all, and know the sorrows of you all, and have borne the grief of it all and I say to you, Forgive one another. Be tender with one another, pursue judgment, bless the oppressed, care for the orphan, and uplift the widow in her need for I have redeemed

you from being orphaned and taken you that you are no longer a widowed people. Rejoice in me, and rejoice with your brethren and sisters who are mine also. Be one.

There remains [a] great work yet to be done. Receive my covenant and abide in it, not as in the former time when jarring, jealousy, contention, and backbiting caused anger, broke hearts, and hardened the souls of those claiming to be my saints. But receive it in spirit, in meekness, and in truth. I have given you a former commandment that I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. And again, I have taught that if you forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. How do I act toward mankind: If men intend no offense I take no offense, but if they are taught and should have obeyed, then I reprove and correct and forgive and forget. You cannot be at peace with one another if you take offense when none is intended. But again I say, Judge not others except by the rule you want used to weigh yourself.

My eyes are over the whole earth and all men everywhere are before me. Men conspire to overthrow and oppress, and use violence to control others through fear. My Spirit restrains the destroyer to allow those who are in the world and willing to give heed to my words time to prepare, but I will not always suffer...the wickedness of man.

The Earth groans under the wickedness of mankind upon her face, and she longs for peace to come. She withholds the abundance of her bounty because of the offenses of men against me, against one another, and against her. But if righteousness returns and my people prove by their actions, words, and thoughts to yield to my Spirit and hearken to my commandments, then will the Earth rejoice, for the feet of those who cry peace upon her mountains are beautiful indeed, and I, the Lord, will bring again Zion, and the earth will rejoice.

In the world tares are ripening...so I ask you, What of the wheat? Let your pride, and your envy, and your fears depart from you. [And] I will come to my tabernacle and dwell with my people in Zion, and none will overtake it.

Cry peace. Proclaim my words. Invite those who will repent to be baptized and forgiven, and they shall obtain my Spirit to guide them. The time is short and I come quickly, therefore open your mouths and warn others to flee the wrath which is to come as men in anger destroy one another. The wicked shall destroy the wicked, and I will hold the peacemakers in the palm of my hand and none can take them from me.

Be comforted, be of good cheer, rejoice, and look up, for I am with you who remember me, and all those who watch for me, always, even unto the end.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's comments during an assembly on "Missionary Work" in Eden, Utah, on July 2, 2016;
- His "Opening Remarks," given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho, on September 3rd, 2017; and
- The presentation of "Answer and Covenant," given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho, on September 3rd, 2017.