

Book of Mormon Study – Mosiah 4-6

Online zoom Sunday School, 26 Apr 2020

Cleansing the inner vessel; focus on inward change.

Mosiah 4:1-3

King Benjamin's audience cried out in prayer this petition to God: "O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men." (Mosiah 4: 2.) What strikes me about this prayer is that today we would identify this with the Evangelical/Born Again Christian approach to a religious experience. It is a confession of belief coupled with a request for forgiveness. Latter-day Saints belittle this approach. We claim that much more is needed, including certain authoritative rites and ordinances. Ultimately, that may be part of God's plan, and certainly Christ's own example informs us that baptism was required even of Him "to fulfill all righteousness." (Matt. 3: 13-15.) But the ordinances are signposts that provide an outward proof of inward change. Here, in the account of King Benjamin, we have the focus entirely upon the inward change. This is the "weightier" part of the process. Christ condemned those who observed the ordinances, but failed to exercise mercy and faith; the inward target of the outward observance. (See, e.g., Matt. 23: 23.) There is some considerable peril in being too proud of your ordinances. They have displaced the inward, weightier part of the Gospel in past dispensations, and certainly can do so again. Satan has no new tricks. The old ones seem to work so well, there is little reason to introduce some new road for apostasy. Pride in ordinances as the ticket for salvation works every time it is tried. It's a little thing, but little things count when the measurement is taken against perfection.

Mosiah 4:2

"for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things;" see note "Son of God the Father of heaven and earth" from last week's lesson notes, pg 3.

Slavery and Beggars

Mosiah 4:16

His policy anticipated the discontinuance of servitude in the Law of Moses. (Mosiah 2: 14.) Long before Christ would do so, King Benjamin made people free from slavery. But that came at a social cost. Without servitude as a form of repayment (limited under Moses' law to six years servitude, in the seventh they go free Ex. 21: 2), some were reduced to begging. For those, King Benjamin taught his people that they must give to beggars. He required that his people notice them, and not allow them to petition in vain for relief from their needs. (Mosiah 4: 16.) He forbid withholding from beggars because of the convenient thought beggars deserve their direful condition. (Mosiah 4: 17-18.)

SJ footnote for 4:18

One of the prophetic meanings of Sukkot is that of the millennial Kingdom and the Mashiach tabernacling with us (see Zech. 14:16). The Kingdom and Kingdom-living are important themes in King Binyamin's message (see Moshiah 2:3–4).

SJ footnote for 4:19

Sukkot teaches us our dependence on Elohim and reminds us of the forty years in the wilderness in which we were totally dependent.

SJ footnote 4:20

A reference to the water libation ceremony performed at Sukkot, in which the priests poured out water and wine, mixing them together over the altar (m.Sukkah 4:9 [b.Sukkah 48a–b]). In John 7:37–38 (which was also at Sukkot, see also John 7:2), Yeshua referred to this ceremony as well, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures have said, rivers of water of life will flow from his belly."

If you have any ability to relieve the suffering of another person, it is your responsibility to do so. The undesirable beggar, the foreigner who does not belong, is the one we tend to judge. The beggar whose language and customs are strange to us is easy to dismiss. He 'deserves' this condemnation, we think. Yet that thought is the very thought King Benjamin is warning us about.

Outside the Salt Lake Temple are beggars who regularly put up their petition in vain to those passing into and out of the Temple. It is unlikely the Temple patrons could not spare something to relieve the suffering of the beggars. That location is one which allows Saints daily to demonstrate they have heard and are willing to obey, the principles of sacrifice.

I used to think having the right heart must precede action to be of any worth. What I have found instead is that action can lead the heart. Christ's Sermon on the Mount is a call to action. Do the things asked by Him, and the heart will follow. The mind can lead the heart. The heart does not always have to go first.

In 3 Ne. 27:27, Christ poses this question, and gives the answer: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am." Christ came to save men, not to condemn them. (John 3:17) We must learn to be like Him. If He forgave men frankly and freely, then why should we believe ourselves justified when we judge, condemn and belittle them? How then can we obtain a hope or faith that we can inherit the same position with the exalted?

"We should remember how [Christ] supplicates with gentleness, and never compels or demands we follow Him. President Spencer W. Kimball described the beggar's petition in these words: 'I have seen your cathedrals with altars of gold and silver and your beggars on the cold floors of such edifices, with their skinny arms extended and their bony hands cupped and raised to those who come to see or to worship.' (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, The*. Edited by Edward L. Kimball. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982, p. 214, emphasis added.) This sign of entreaty from the beggar, whose petition invites those who can to give them alms, is surely a sign for how He beckons for us. He entreats. He implores. He invites. But He does not proceed with a clenched fist, a harsh gesture, an insistent demand. His cupped

hand beckons us to give Him our attention. Surely those who are His true messengers will do likewise. Surely one sign they have been sent by Him is this gentle entreaty, and not a call which relies on status. Since no power or authority can or ought to be maintained by virtue of His priesthood, His true messengers will never claim people should follow them because of their pretended authority. They will use, instead, pure knowledge which will greatly enlarge the souls of His sheep. They hear His voice in these gentle words of truth. For them the status of the teacher is irrelevant, and only the message is important.

Among the ordinances Christ has given mankind, water is used to baptize and to wash. Consecrated oil is used to anoint and to bless. These are the ceremonial symbols of Christ's love. His love cleanses us. His oil anoints us to glory. These liquids signify the removal of sin and stains. They cleanse us and renew us spiritually. They are symbols of the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Christ. They signify holiness and spirituality. Both are preeminent symbols of love.

Liquid cannot be grasped nor held in the hand. The tighter the hand closes, the more liquid is forced out. Indeed, the only way to hold water or oil in our hand is to cup our palm. Only by making the hand open can these symbolic liquids be held. In the ordinances and liquids employed to show the cleansing power of His love, He reminds us of the true sign of His messengers. They, like Him, will petition. They will never come with a clenched hand but only an open, cupped hand, inviting the follower and beckoning him to come.

Is not the cupped hand recognized everywhere as the beggar's petition? Is it not a symbol of beseeching? Does it not remind us of how we look to our Father in Heaven for all that we have? In this simple physical symbol we see how Christ's power to ordain and control power, principalities, thrones, dominions under His almighty hand is linked inevitably to the openness, the uncontrolling, and petitioning hand which has been lovingly extended in cupping shape. His hand is never clenched, tight, controlling. An open hand is a sign of both Christ and His true messengers. They, like Him, will show forth love, openness, and the kind of gentle petitioning and beckoning that is seen in the beggar's cupped hand for us to follow. They will never claim authority except to bless or ordain.

Of all that can be said of Our Lord, it is His love which distinguishes Him the most. He is the greatest because He loves more than any of us. He is the greatest, but He acts as the least. His message is delivered by entreaty. When we finally see Him as He is, we will all recognize Him as the very definition of Love; for God is Love. (1 Jn. 4:8.) In turn, His followers will learn to love." (Denver Snuffer, *Come Let Us Adore Him*, pg 289-291)

[SJ footnote 4:22](#)

51 Parallel to Yeshua's Sukkot teaching, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge with a righteous judgment" (John 7:2, 24). As we read in the Mishnah, Hillel taught, "And do not judge your fellow until you are in his place" (m.Avot 2:4).

Mosiah 4:26

Our assistance to those in need is directly related to God forgiving our sins.

Spirit of Prophecy

Mosiah 5:3

"were it expedient we could prophesy of all things."

Prophecy is one of the hallmark signs of gift the Holy Ghost (example, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery's baptism, JSH 1:73-74)

Jay's Letter to Marcus (Stake Book of Mormon Institute class instructor), 16 Jul 2019

Note how many times in Mosiah 18 verses 10-16 the Spirit is promised, poured out and the people are filled with the spirit and grace (I counted six times). This happened without any mention of the gift of the Holy Ghost being given by laying on of hands. We see this also in the experience of Joseph and Oliver's baptism. Joseph Smith received an audience with the Father and the Son, stood in a pillar of fire, and was commissioned to do a great work. and yet the first time his testimony mentions the Holy Ghost is after baptism, and after baptism, using authority which John the Baptist told him had not the right to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. That would happen at some subsequent occasion. Why then, without the laying on of hands by one having authority, did Joseph Smith receive the Holy Ghost?

At the time Joseph and Oliver were baptized, they had no authority from heaven with which to confer the Holy Ghost. (JS-H 1: 70.) They had no ordinance available to them other than baptism. (JS-H 1: 70-71.) They performed the ordinance as instructed. But afterwards, without any authority to confer upon one another the Holy Ghost, they nevertheless had the gift of the Holy Ghost poured out upon them. (JS-H 1: 73.) This was not merely a temporary visit of the Holy Ghost. It lingered thereafter with them so they could understand the scriptures in the manner they were intended to be understood when these scriptures were first inspired by the Holy Ghost in the minds of the prophets who wrote them. (JS-H 1: 74.)

As Joseph and Oliver experienced these things, "No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things." (JS-H 1: 73.)

Mosiah 5:7-15

What is the significance of taking on the name of Mashiach?

Know the name by which ye are called (5:14) To know this name is to become like Him (see LoF 7:9-11)

SJ footnote 5:10

A word play: "Binyamin" means "a son of the right hand."

SJ footnote 5:15

Binyamin is speaking at Sukkot and reflecting on the themes of the other recent fall holy days. As we read in the Talmud: "For it has been taught: 'All are judged on Rosh Hashanah and their doom is sealed on Yom Kippur' (b. Rosh Hashanah 16a), and it has been taught: 'Beth Shammai says: There will be three groups at the Day of Judgment: one of thoroughly righteous, one of thoroughly wicked, and one of intermediate. The thoroughly righteous will forthwith be inscribed definitively as entitled to everlasting life; the thoroughly wicked will forthwith be inscribed definitively as doomed to Gehinnom'" (b. Rosh Hashanah 16b).