

Sacrament Meeting Talk 7/17/16

As I contemplated giving this talk, I knew I wanted to unveil truths about myself and how I think about the gospel where no one can see the secret thoughts that I rarely tell anyone.

--Two ideas emerged: my fears and my contrary feelings of being both human and spiritual

I am two selves—mortal/human and spiritual/faith

--mortal learns by senses, cognition, analysis, synthesis—limited and at times faulty

--spiritual truths are comprehended through the spirit of our Father; truths can't be explained rationally

In my life I have been both mortal and spiritual from the time I was a child. Then I didn't make the distinction between the two. Now I can in retrospect. Here is a sampling of behaviors in my mortal and spiritual realm:

Mortal me: (thinking I knew how to handle situations)

- I said swear words before I was baptized so I would have sins
- 1st grade I scribbled on a girl's drawing because it was stupid
- Pulled the buttons off Carol's gym blouse because I could
- Cheated on a religion test at BYU
- Living in fears of inadequate intellect
- Drowning in clutter

Spiritual me: (acting with spirit, not human choices)

- Read *Nathan, Boy of Capernaum* in class in fourth grade class; enveloped in Spirit
- Helped LaVoy with spelling each week when no one else would
- Was bathed in tears the first time I read *The Infinite Atonement*
- Felt the promptings of the spirit, when Elder Eyring and I spoke together in sacrament meeting, to say words I had not prepared
- Experienced God's love and spirit with the birth of our first child

Mortal and spiritual ways of knowing can become blurred. Sometimes we believe we are operating in a spiritual mode when we are actually relying almost entirely on limited mortal perception that seems natural to us.

"This is the confusion that makes it possible to know the scriptures inside and out without ever being illuminated by the spiritual fire that testifies of the truth of those scriptures. This is why people can recite all that mortals can know about Jesus Christ without ever knowing Christ or being touched by His spirit." Michelle James

I want to look at FEAR and see how it confounds me into not knowing if I am being mortal or spiritual in my everyday choices. These are the fears that I secretly harbor without ever talking about them.

Mortal fears:

- Making decisions
- Being alone
- Unhappiness
- Rejection
- Change
- Failure
- Inadequacy
- Being unseen
- Clutter

Spiritual fears:

- God not loving me
- Never doing enough spiritually
- Prayers not heard or answered
- Inadequate testimony
- Superficial knowledge of scriptures
- Lacking charity and service
- Incomplete forgiveness of others
- Lack of deep understanding of the temple

Now, when I look back, I see these fears with a clarity that comes with knowing the difference between human/mortal perception and spiritual perception. My fears are centered in the mortal me. I can erase these fears when I acknowledge the whole of my life is seeking to know Christ, feeling His power in my life, choosing to make Him the center of my life.

Gerald Clark stated: "What is the source of fear? I think it is rooted in the assumption—that comes all too easily if I am not paying attention—that I must solve all my problems and face all my challenges alone, using my own resources. So when I am fearful, I am also hopeless. And without hope, I find myself paralyzed. . . That fear is a failure of faith."

The antidote to failures in both categories and to living only in a mortal vein is knowing Christ and living by his word daily, minutely.

Listen to this discovery of Christ in the life of Michelle Stott James, a BYU professor, as she spoke in a BYU Devotional in June.

"Many years ago as a high school student, I had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with several Catholic nuns who lived in a convent in my hometown and worked in the nearby Catholic hospital. As their schedules permitted, I often spent time with them, walking in the park or visiting in the parlor of the convent.

"One afternoon I happened to be talking with Sister Columba. She was a tiny elderly woman who had been a member of the Irish army before she became a nun. That day she was sharing with me the profound love that she had for our Savior, Jesus Christ, and as she spoke, tears were streaming down her face. It was a powerful spiritual moment that touched me in the deepest center of my being.

"After I left that day, I pondered Sister Columba's testimony of Christ. I had grown up as a member of the LDS Church. I had attended my church meetings and seminary classes. Frequently, I had born testimony that the gospel of Jesus Christ was true, and yet I could not comprehend how it could be with all of this truth that I had never felt anything for Jesus Christ, certainly nothing like the level of worship and gratitude that I had experienced from Sister Columba.

"That afternoon with this frail nun in the parlor of the convent became the definitive moment of my spiritual growth as I launched my quest to know my Savior, which has shaped my entire life. The most critical point that I have at last come to comprehend is the absolute centrality of Jesus Christ and His atonement to every aspect of our lives."

We need to feel Christ in our lives, not just know about Him. We need to feel his unconditional love for us; we must choose to find that love.

I John 4:18-19: There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us.

Michelle continues:

'We gain this spiritual training by immersing ourselves in engaged church activity, temple attendance, scripture study, and sincere personal prayer. If we take these opportunities seriously, and consciously try to use them as they were intended, these times of spiritual involvement become the school room, the laboratory, for our spiritual development. They provide the opportunity to step away from the world and its demands so that we can actively exercise our inner spiritual ways of perceiving. If our religious beliefs seem to be stale, mundane, or simply habitual, it is generally because we are only viewing them through our mortal perception. This is like looking at the Grand Canyon at night when the colors are darkened, the shapes are blurred and everything seems shadowed, indistinct, and unremarkable.'

We show love for Christ by making space in our lives for Him. This means consciously devoting time every day to seriously studying His words, meditating on the scriptures that teach of Him, and praying to know Him, utilizing both our mortal and spiritual forms of perception.

2 Timothy 1:7: For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

D&C 38:30: . . . but if ye are prepared ye shall not fear.

Yes, the healing power of the Atonement is there, maybe only in the moments when I am filled with faith and spirituality, crowding out my fears, that I make myself available to the healing and enabling power of the Atonement.

One of my mortal failings is clutter—in my house, in my organizational patterns, in my lack of daily thought processes. Often I cannot pay attention to my spiritual life because I need to clean up, clean out, and discard distractions in front of me first. Clutter is the wall that daily blocks out the spirit of Christ that I hunger to feel. When I picture the place of Christ in my life, I think of a vortex of brilliant light,

swirling around in the center of my life. This light infuses every moment of my waking hours and eclipses and the darkness, fear, doubt, with its spirit and power. That is how I want Christ to fill my life; I don't want to know about Him. I want him filling every nerve ending in my body and soul. I am learning to choose Christ over my human fears.

That is why I have to deal with my fear of clutter on a spiritual level. Christ will help to strengthen me to face this monster, for I cannot face it alone. With my increased vision of Christ comes increased motivation. My mortal life is a constant struggle between choosing a oneness with God or a oneness with the world.

D&C 6:20 states "Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love."

Christ not only listens to our prayers one by one, but he suffered for us one by one.

C.S. Lewis shared these feelings: "Christ has infinite attention to spare for each one of us. He does not have to deal with us in the mass. You are as much alone with Him as if you were the only being He had ever created. When Christ died, He died for you individually just as much as if you had been the only man in the world."

There were no ulterior motives or hidden agendas in the Savior's ministry—only love, unrestrained and freely given. Tad Callister in *The Infinite Atonement* continues by saying,

"It was a love that reached out to every individual, as he or she was, and lifted them to a higher ground. Love was exhibited in every conscious, waking moment of his mortal life. Love flowed from every pore, every thought, every act. As naturally and regularly as we seek air, he sought to bless. Again and again in those moments of physical exhaustion and pressing "agendas" he was there for the one—to listen, to love, and to bless. His entire life was an accumulation of acts of love, capped by the most significant of all—his atoning sacrifice."

And so I am learning to repent of all my fears and sins. I have to ask myself as Alma did, "Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?" That is true repentance: a burning resolve to make amends with God at any cost. Repentance gives me a new heart, a broken heart, a changed heart, a contrite heart. Ironically, the greatest barrier to repentance is always me, myself. I will have no excuses or blaming of others because I am choosing to be right with God. If I have strength to do this, in John 14:7 Christ says, "My peace I give unto you."

The Atonement is the most powerful motivational force in the world to be good from day to day and, when necessary, to repent when I have fallen short.

The Savior is anxious that the Atonement make us better, for the atoning sacrifice was designed to motivate us, to draw us unto him, to lift us to higher ground, and ultimately to assist us in becoming as he is.

Two weeks ago in testimony meeting, we all experienced the power and honesty of Dawn's words as she told of her forthcoming divorce. Her testimony blazed with power as she expressed her love and gratitude for the Savior. That took me back almost 25 years ago when my husband and I divorced. I stood up in that testimony meeting and explained my circumstances so that no one would feel awkward about talking with me about it. That was one of the last times that I bore my testimony in a sacrament meeting. I have allowed my fears of rejection and inadequacy to silence my testimony in front of people I love. Today that fear is gone and I would like to share my testimony with you.

My Testimony:

My heart is full of the love of Christ. I have learned to study and savor His words in a new and meaningful way and to think of Him before I make any kind of a mundane decision in my daily life. I am beginning to understand the Atonement in the most rudimentary way, but I have made a beginning. I am choosing to rid myself of fears and hiding in anonymity from those of you I don't know very well. The comfort I have felt in hiding no longer enshrouds me. I am thankful to Joseph Smith for having the courage and direction to pray for and receive the Father and the Son for all of us. I know that this church is directed through the holy priesthood and that Christ is our head and heart. This church is the true and only path that leads to the Lord and Jesus Christ. I ask the Lord to bless me to center my life, thoughts, and behaviors in the life of Jesus Christ. I am thankful for the knowledge of His divine nature, for our bishopric, for our prophet, and the plan of salvation. My deep gratitude for the Lord's love drowns my fears and allows me to function on a spiritual, not just a human level. I am filled with love for this knowledge, and I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.