

I am so very grateful for the love and sacrifice of our savior, Jesus Christ. On this Easter morning we celebrate his great gift to all humankind. I once met with a faithful Christian man who is not a member of our church. I remember that it was right out in the foyer of this building. We were discussing the atonement of Jesus Christ. He expressed a thought that captured my attention. He said, “you know, it was painful and difficult for Christ to suffer for my sins and for your sins. But can you imagine how difficult it must have been for him to suffer for the sins of those who he knew would not accept his sacrifice.” I had never considered this before.

As parents, as friends, we experience both the joy and the pain of serving others, of loving them. And sometimes our efforts to love and serve are rejected. I believe, however, that we would find it difficult or impossible to make those sacrifices for others if we knew for certain that they would be rejected. Could we do that?

In Matthew 26 we read:

36 ¶ Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called [Gethsemane](#), and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and [pray](#) yonder.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and [began](#) to be sorrowful and very heavy.

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is [exceeding sorrowful](#), even unto death: tarry ye here, and [watch](#) with me.

39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and [prayed](#), saying, O my [Father](#), if it be possible, let this [cup](#) pass from me: nevertheless not as I [will](#), but as [thou wilt](#).

In Luke, 22 we get a little more detail about this marvelous event:

42 Father, if thou be willing, [remove](#) this cup from me: nevertheless not my [will](#), but thine, be done.

43 And there appeared an [angel](#) unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an [agony](#) he prayed more earnestly: [and](#) his sweat was as it were great drops of [blood](#) falling down to the ground.

In graduate school I took a class from Father Daniel Barrigan. If you are my age or older you probably recognize him as a person famous for his many arrests as an anti-war activist. Now I want to be clear that I am sharing this story not as a criticism of his faith. In fact, I have a certain knowledge that his opinion is not in keeping with the Catholic tradition.

In our class one evening we were discussing the suffering that Christ had done. As part of that discussion, he said that he “believed that the “great drops of blood” which Christ shed and his call to the Father to “Let this cup pass from me” were indicative of His fear of dying.” Immediately after he spoke those words he called for a break, and he left the room. There were about 12 of us in the room. We all stayed and discussed what had just been shared. We did not believe that Christ

was afraid to die, we expressed our belief that Christ realized the great pain and suffering He was about to face, but that He did not fear death.

That suffering was real, and it was intense. I also believe that it was immensely personal.

At the baptism of Jesus we read in John Chapter 1 of the prophesy of John the Baptist that “John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the [Lamb](#) of God, which taketh away the [sin](#) of the world.” We often say that Jesus paid for OUR sins or that His atonement redeemed the whole world. These statements are true, but they do not convey how deeply personal His suffering was for each of us as individuals.

I do not know how, but I am convinced that in those few hours in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross at Calvary, I was considered as an individual that Christ knew and called by name. He uttered the phrase “oh Peter, I love you so much.” He did that for each and every one of us. “Oh Connie, Oh Joshua, Oh Marie” over and over and over again. As a human I cannot fathom how this could be. Recent estimates of the total population that has ever lived are in the 100 billion range. How can Christ consider each of us as individuals in such a short period of time? I do not know, but how could it be any other way? Our salvation is wholly dependent upon his grace. We are saved as individuals and His salvation is provided

individually. We, of course, want to experience exaltation with our families, united for eternity with those that we love.

A couple of weeks ago in General Conference, Elder Patrick Kearon gave a very passionate address about the healing provided through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Not only did our Savior save us from our sins, but He also suffered for the pain we have experienced and will experience. He concluded his address with the following words:

Your gentle Savior declared, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that [you] might have life, and that [you] might have it more abundantly.” You are a survivor, you can heal, and you can trust that with the power and grace of Jesus Christ, you will overcome and conquer.

Jesus specializes in the seemingly impossible. He came here to make the impossible possible, the irredeemable redeemable, to heal the unhealable, to right the unrightable, to promise the unpromisable.²² And He’s really good at it. In fact, He’s perfect at it. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Healer, amen.

End quote.

Now let me return to the wonderful glory of this Easter morning. We gather this morning to celebrate the empty tomb. Christ suffered in the Garden of

Gethsemane and on the cross at Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins. He rose on the third morning to break the bands of death. Because he was resurrected, we will all be resurrected. Again, I cannot explain how someone that has experienced a moral death can be resurrected, but it is true. A return to full life, perfect in a way that was not perfect during mortality.

I testify that our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ love us more than we can comprehend. Christ is eager to be the advocate with the Father on our behalf. Those sins, no matter how large or small, are paid for. Cash them in. Remove that burden from your soul. Know that Christ not only suffered for your sins but suffered the pain and sorrow that you have experienced. There is no more perfect example of empathy our Savior, Jesus Christ. Take your burden to the Lord. I express my profound appreciation for His great gift. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.