

Mosiah 4.²⁶⁻²⁷

²⁶And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. ²⁷And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order.

In addition to being a season of self-reflection, confession, and repentance, Lent is a season of alms giving. Today's passage talks a bit about that. It would, of course, be wrong-headed to hear King Benjamin's admonition that we "impart our substance to the poor" "for the sake of retaining a remission of sins" as the primary reason for caring for those less advantaged than us.

To be motivated out of personal gain in this way would be like imagining that as Jesus carried his cross to Calvary he was considering all the blessings that would flow to him because of his willing sacrifice. I suspect that if we believed that Jesus acted out of such self-interest we might lose a tad of respect for him and his sacrifice. But it is highly doubtful that many if any of us imagine Jesus having such thoughts. Rather, we imagine him thinking of the blessing that would flow to others because of his willing sacrifice. We might even like to think that maybe our name or our face flashed through his mind as he considered the benefits that would come to those who applied his atonement in their lives. We might even imagine him offering a short prayer in which he pleaded that we would accept his generous gift.

So, during Lent, as always, we care for the poor, not because of the benefits that come to us but because of the benefits it brings to others. We care for the poor because it is the right thing to do. It is the humane thing to do. It is the Christ-like thing to do. We care for the poor because we love others the way Jesus loves us. We care for the poor even if we do not receive one red cent's worth of blessings. We care for the poor because it is simply in our natures to be Christ-like.

It is true, though, that alms giving during Lent, or any other time, is an excellent way to remind ourselves of Christ's love for us. As we see, acknowledge, and act upon the needs of others, we are reminded of our own dire needs and how Jesus has so generously met and continues to meet those needs. We are reminded how respectfully he saw, acknowledged, and treated us in our need. We are reminded how he refused then and refuses now to throw our need in our face, and to offer harsh judgement. We are reminded how careful he is with us; how hard he works to help us maintain a sense of self-worth.

We rejoice in being able to be a Christ-like figure in other's lives, however inadequate our efforts might be. We rejoice in helping in such a manner that others not only feel our love and respect and honor and high valuation of them, but also feel such love and respect and honor and high valuation flowing into their lives from the greatest servant of all; the greatest servant the world has ever seen: the Lord Jesus.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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