



Jacob 1.⁸— Meditation 1

Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger, but that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world...

Though I had probably read it dozens of times, it was sometime in my early thirties when I really read, really heard, and then faithfully acted upon the profound admonition That Nephi's little brother, Jacob, extended to his hearers: "View his death."

There is no doubt that for many readers of the Book of Mormon, Jacob, the brother of Nephi lives in the shadow of his more famous brother. Yet, Nephi thinks highly of his younger brother and his gospel insights. Even in the second book that bears Nephi's name, five chapters are devoted to Jacob's teachings and instruction.¹ In fact, Jacob's inspired teachings with their high dependance upon and use of Isaiah seem to have inspired Nephi to include fifteen chapters from Isaiah in his own work.

Nephi, confessing that he had seen "my Redeemer," like Isaiah had, also informs us, "my brother, Jacob, also has seen him as I have seen him."² We cannot say for sure what either of these men saw. However, perhaps Jacob's admonition provides a clue.

In the first chapter of his book, Jacob tells us of his constant admonition of his people. He admonished them "to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God." He admonished them "not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger." He admonished them to "suffer his [Jesus'] cross and bear the shame of the world." Tucked in with these admonitions, is this one: Jacob admonished his people to "view his [Christ's] death."

Think about this final admonition. Think about the importance of the event—of Jesus' death by crucifixion—that Jacob would admonish his people view it.

In April of 1829 as Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were starting their project of translating the Book of Mormon, they received their own admonition. It is a personal invitation from the Lord Jesus himself: "Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet."³ This admonition is not unlike that that Jacob delivered.

As Lent ends and we enter the commemoration of the Savior's final week—Holy Week, as it is called in Christendom—Jacob's admonition to his listeners and the Savior's own invitation to Joseph and Oliver seem especially pertinent. It is the time of times to do more than *remember*, but to labor to *view* with an

¹ 2 Nephi 6-10

² See 2 Nephi 11.²⁻³

³ See DC 6.^{34 & 37}

eye of faith Jesus's final week, his death on the cross, and "the wounds which pierced [his] side," and "the prints of the nails in [his] hands and feet."

Such viewing is not sensationalistic. It is not grotesque or macabre. It is saving and redeeming; for, as Paul bears witness, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."⁴ So, go ahead. Close your eyes. And let the past become present. Step up and stand at the foot of the cross. Look upon his battered body. Marvel at his unconquerable spirit. And *view his death*.

It may be that of all our admonitions over the course of this Lent season, this three-word admonition is the most important and transformative of them all. And not only are they of the utmost importance for Lent and Easter. They are of the utmost importance for every time.

View his death.

You will not regret the effort. I, for one, have never viewed anything more magnificent. So, go ahead. *View his death!*

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: October 24, 2024)

⁴ 1 Corinthians 1.¹⁸

Jacob 1.⁸— Meditation 2

Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger, but that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross and bear the shame of the world...

During his lifetime, Jacob, the better known of Nephi's two younger brothers and successor to Nephi's record keeping ways, "labored diligently" with others in the work of persuasion. In Jacob 1.⁷, Jacob tells us of his labor in persuading his people "to come unto Christ and partake of the goodness of God, that they might enter into his rest, lest by any means he should swear in his wrath they should not enter in, as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness."

In our meditation's titular passage, Jacob returns to the theme of provoking God. He hopes to not only persuade his own people but "all men not to rebel against God, to provoke him to anger." Jacob's following conjoining, "but," informs us what the opposite of rebellion against God looks like and thus how to avoid God's anger or wrath. Put more positively, the conjunction informs us of the nature of fealty to God. Fealty to God entails believing "in Christ." While Jacob's list is certainly not all encompassing, he lists three ways we witness our belief in Christ. We demonstrate our belief in Christ when we 1) "view his death," 2) "suffer his cross," and 3) "bear the shame of the world." These three things constitute Jacob's thoughts on what fealty to God is.

It is perhaps too obvious to say that, here, belief in Christ is bound up with the death and shame he suffered on the cross." So much for belittling the cross of Christ. We are to view his death. His death and remembrance of it are to be central and permanent pillars upon which our faith in Christ are evident and expressed.

Then too, we are to "suffer his cross." So much for the cross being simply a sign of a dying and a dead God. Here, the cross becomes a sign for a way of LIFE. It is a symbol for how disciples live. Disciples of Christ live doing what Jesus did in suffering and dying on the cross. And what Jesus did in dying on the cross is what he had done throughout his earthly life. From the time of his birth and throughout his ministry, Jesus bore "the shame of the world." Jesus bore the shame of the world because he rejected and resisted in every moment in all things the world's wicked and dehumanizing values—values nearly always upheld through violence. Jesus' disciples are to live the same life of rejection of and resistance to the world's value system so inimical to an enduring and progressive life.

There is so very much here, so very much in the sign of the cross that it is difficult to know where to begin. But, as before, we must start somewhere, so we will start with the obvious.

Obviously, the cross is an ultimate sign of violence. In suffering the violence of the cross, Jesus exposed the wickedness and injustice of the world's near constant resort to violence. In suffering his cross, Jesus also resisted the world's belief in and use of violent force to achieve one's ends. One of the world's values is to win at any cost. If and when all else fails, this drive to win often—more probably, nearly always—entails the use of force and violence. Jesus announced his rejection of violent force the evening before his crucifixion. When the cowardly mob came to arrest him, and his own disciples appealed to him to resist arrest through forceful violence, Jesus refused.

“Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?”⁵

Jesus was true to his word the following day. He did not yield to the worldly temptation of violent force even in the defense of his own life. He would not use it to further his ends, no matter how right and glorious his ends might be. The cross, then, is a sign of his rejection and resistance to violence.

But the cross is not only a sign of Jesus’ rejection of violence. The cross is a sign to be picked up and born by Jesus’ disciples. It is a sign of their discipleship in following his example in rejecting and resisting the world’s lie that violence is inevitable, enlivening, and enduring.

Related to the rejection of violence is the bearing of “the shame of the world.” The world is ashamed and scandalized, of course, by those who will not pick up the sword and use violence to further ends—their own or the group’s—deemed to be “holy. The cross, then, is a sign of Jesus’ and our own willingness to endure shame rather than yield to the world’s violent values. But bearing the shame of the world runs further and deeper than the rejection of violence.

When we think of the shame Jesus suffered on the cross, we again think first of the obvious. We think of the physical shame of hanging on the cross. We think of the shame of having his body exposed, everyone looking upon his nakedness as he lost control of his body and all bodily functions. We think too on the emotional shame of being thought of as defeated, exposed as a fraud and failure.

“He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him...”⁶

Think of the shame in being rejected by society and considered a criminal, disloyal to whatever the world has whimsically determined to be of value. Now, we like to say that Jesus was without sin. And so he was. But, throughout his life, Jesus was guilty of resisting and violating worldly principles and values. This made him a criminal in the eyes of the world. In crucifying Jesus, the world displayed in the most certain terms possible that it was ashamed of him. It was ashamed of the way he had always resisted its “charms.” He had stood up, for example, for segments of society that were deemed shameful: the poor, the publican, the leper, the female, the blind, the deaf, the lame, the possessed, and, yes, the sinner. The world found vulnerability shameful. But Jesus embraced it. By embracing it, he transformed it. This, of course, is consistent with the intuition of his own mother, Mary.

“He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
and exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.”⁷

We might think of the opposite of shame as pride. We know what the world takes pride in. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Book of Mormon where the world is depicted as a great and spacious building. The world’s pride is wealth and power and prestige. In other words, the world’s shame is poverty and vulnerability and commonness. The world shames those who resist its perverted value system devoted to wealth, power, and prestige. The world takes pride in the acquisition of such by any means necessary—

⁵ Matthew 26.⁵²⁻⁵³

⁶ Matthew 27.⁴²⁻⁴³

⁷ Luke 1.⁵²⁻⁵³

means that are most often disrespectful and demeaning to the value of the individual and violent toward the individual's wellbeing.

Jesus lived resisting the wicked, violent, and destructive values of this world. Violence, yes. But also the wicked propaganda concerning wealth, power, and prestige. For his resistance, Jesus suffered the cross and bore "the shame of the world." The cross is a sign of Jesus' faithfulness in bearing the shame of the world; in rejecting and resisting all that the world takes pride in. The cross is, then, as we have said repeatedly, a sign that signifies life as much as it does death. The cross is less about how Jesus died and more about how he lived.

But, further, the cross signifies the life to which any and every disciple of Jesus is called. This life is the same life Jesus lived. It is a life of resistance to and rejection of the world's perverted values in which it takes pride. It is a life of resistance and rejection, knowing full well that this resistance and rejection will bring the world's shame.

This cross can be a heavy load to bear. But if we would be disciples of Jesus, we must live the life of the cross and suffer the world's shame as Jesus did. This is how we war against the world. There can be no peaceful coexistence with it or its perversions.

Yes, we are to live with crosses. We are to bear crosses. However shameful.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(edition: October 24, 2025)