

The Worth of Souls

Bob Simmons 5/13/2018

When Brother DeMonja invited me to speak today, he simply started by asking me if I was going to be at church. I responded that when one is in the bishopric that question automatically comes loaded with the heading "ALTERIOR MOTIVE" all over it. He immediately confessed that I was correct and then got right to the point of his question.

After nearly 5 years in the bishopric as ward clerk, I became quite adept at avoiding the invitation to speak in sacrament meeting but 10 months after being released, here I am.

I am grateful to speak today.....not because I'm particularly excited to speak, but because the topic I've been asked to speak on is one that is near and dear to me and one that, I believe, we can never hear enough about.

THE WORTH OF SOULS

Since today is Mother's Day, let me express appreciation for the many women in my life who, over the years, have helped many of Heavenly Father's children remember their worth. Some of these include:

My mom; who taught me when I was young that I have value and who always made sure that I knew my opinion was important and that I was an important part of a family.

My mother-in-law; who to this day goes out of her way to make people, even strangers, feel loved and important by thanking them for what they do and recognizing the many small tasks that often go unnoticed.

My wife; who would spend 28+ hours a day helping and serving others if she could.

And my daughters; who are learning exceptional qualities from these great women and from you here.

To all mothers and women, thank you for your teachings and for not being perfect....yet....so that we can continue to learn from your example.

Sister Joy D Jones told the story of Renu Singh, a church member in India. Renu said,

Before I started investigating the Church, I didn't really feel that I was very special. I was just one of many people, and my society and culture didn't really teach me that I had any value as an individual. When I learned the gospel and learned that I was a daughter of our Heavenly Father, it changed me. Suddenly I felt so special—God had actually created me and had created my soul and my life with value and purpose.

“Before I had the gospel in my life, I was always trying to prove to others that I was someone special. But when I learned the truth, that I am a daughter of

God, I didn't have to prove anything to anyone. I knew that I was special. ... Don't ever think that you are nothing."

Let's look at a scripture found in revelation given to Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer in June of 1829. That's 189 years ago next month. We've known about this for a while now.....

D&C 18:10.

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God."

So that we can better understand what this means, let's look closer at a couple of the words.

SOUL

The scriptures speak of souls in three ways: (1) spirit beings, both premortal and postmortal (Alma 40:11-14; Abr. 3:23); (2) a spirit and a body united in mortality (D&C 88:15; Abr. 5:7); and (3) an immortal, resurrected person whose spirit and body have become inseparably connected (2 Ne. 9:13; D&C 88:15-16).

So when we think of a soul, we may think of any of these definitions. It doesn't matter which definition we use, a soul has GREAT worth in the sight of God.

WORTH

Worth is defined as an Old English word meaning VALUE.

As we can see, our Heavenly Father values us!! and has from the beginning.

WORTHINESS

Another word with the same root as worth is worthiness. Sister Joy D Jones taught us just two general conferences ago this important principle, she said:

Let me point out the need to differentiate between two critical words: *worth* and *worthiness*. They are not the same. Spiritual *worth* means to value ourselves the way Heavenly Father values us, not as the world values us. Our worth was determined before we ever came to this earth. On the other hand, *worthiness* is achieved through obedience. If we sin, we are less worthy, but we are never worth less! We continue to repent and strive to be like Jesus with our worth intact. No matter what, we always have worth in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. Joy D. Jones Oct 2017

I would add...Our worth is independent of our actions.

Alma knew this doctrine when he spoke to his son Corianton recorded in Alma 39:17 where he says “Behold, I say unto you, is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming?” We see that a soul has the same worth or value at any time during its existence.

Speaking of worthiness, Marvin J Ashton, who once served in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, spoke in general conference saying:

It occurs to me that there are probably hundreds or even thousands who do not understand what worthiness is. Worthiness is a process, and perfection is an eternal trek. We can be worthy to enjoy certain privileges without being perfect.

We need to come to terms with our desire to reach perfection and our frustration when our accomplishments or behaviors are less than perfect. I feel that one of the great myths we would do well to dispel is that we’ve come to earth to perfect ourselves, and nothing short of that will do. If I understand the teachings of the prophets of this dispensation correctly, we will not become perfect in this life, though we can make significant strides toward that goal.

I am also convinced of the fact that the speed with which we head along the straight and narrow path isn’t as important as the direction in which we are traveling. That direction, if it is leading toward eternal goals, is the all-important factor.

When we dwell on our own weaknesses, it is easy to dwell on the feelings that we are unworthy. Somehow we need to bridge the gap between continually striving to improve and yet not feeling defeated when our actions aren't perfect all the time. We need to remove *unworthy* from our vocabulary and replace it with *hope* and *work*. This we can do if we turn to quieter, deeper, surer guidelines—the words of our prophets and leaders, past and present. Marvin J Ashton april 1989 gen conf.

So again, let's remind ourselves....

Our worth is inherent in who we are. Our worthiness depends on obedience, repentance and relying on the atonement of our Savior Jesus Christ, which he willingly made in our behalf because of His love for us.

President Thomas S Monson declared in April conference of 2006: “The worth of a soul is its capacity to become as God.”

Sister Jones added, If we choose to focus on our negative thoughts and doubt our worth instead of clinging to the Savior, it becomes more difficult to feel the impressions of the Holy Ghost. As the Savior lifts us to higher ground, we can see more clearly not only who we are but also that we are closer to Him than we ever imagined.

President Spencer W Kimball reminded us that “God is your Father. He loves you. He and your Mother in heaven value you beyond any measure. ... You are unique. One of a kind, made of the eternal intelligence which gives you claim upon eternal life.

“Let there be no question in your mind about your value as an individual. The whole intent of the gospel plan is to provide an opportunity for each of you to reach your fullest potential, which is eternal progression and the possibility of godhood.”

If you have ever seen the expansive night sky, away from city lights, with the millions of stars and planets visible and millions more not visible, you may have felt, as I have, how insignificant you may be in the universe and how it is that you could have significant worth.

Let me conclude with the follow thoughts from Elder Dieter Uchtdorf from October conference in 2011.

God Himself said we are the reason He created the universe! His work and glory—the purpose for this magnificent universe—is to save and exalt mankind.⁸ In other words, the vast expanse of eternity, the glories and mysteries of infinite space and time are all built for the benefit of ordinary mortals like you and me. Our Heavenly Father created the universe that we might reach our potential as His sons and daughters.

The Lord uses a scale very different from the world’s to weigh the worth of a soul.

No matter where you live, no matter how humble your circumstances, how meager your employment, how limited your abilities, how ordinary your appearance, or how little your calling in the Church may appear to you, you are not invisible to your Heavenly Father. He loves you. He knows your humble heart and your acts of love and kindness. Together, they form a lasting testimony of your fidelity and faith.

Brothers and sisters, the most powerful Being in the universe is the Father of your spirit. He knows you. He loves you with a perfect love.

God sees you not only as a mortal being on a small planet who lives for a brief season—He sees you as His child. He sees you as the being you are capable and designed to become. He wants you to know that you matter to Him.

I add my testimony to Elder Uchtdorf's. That our Heavenly Father loves us unconditionally. That he values each one of us individually. That our worth is infinite to Him not because of our state of worthiness but because of our potential to become what he desires us to become and knows that we can through faith, repentance and relying on the atoning gift of Jesus Christ.

Today we honor mothers because of their great worth to us on earth and in heaven.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.