

Windows of Heaven  
Sacrament Meeting  
November 21, 2010

These words from Malachi have a familiar ring for faithful Latter-day Saints: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Many of us are tithe payers, use these thoughts to contemplate how the windows of heaven have been opened in your lives. For those of you who are struggling to pay your tithing consider the blessings that you are forfeiting. You may think of tithing as a temporal law with temporal blessings, but I testify that it is much much more. Although in most of the examples I will share people received temporal blessings the spiritual blessings are far greater. These stories put into perspective our need to be grateful for the blessings that we have.

NINA was a wonderful woman I taught on my mission. She was the first person that I taught about the law of tithing. As a Russian she was not shy about telling us exactly how much she made and where she spent it. When she was finished I was convinced that there was no way she could pay tithing. Just to give you an idea she received about \$20 a month to pay for all of her expenses. As missionaries we received \$220 a month each to pay for our food and transportation. How these people lived on so little I will never know. My companion and I promised her that if she would pay her tithing the Lord would bless her, but she would have to exercise her faith and pay it before she would receive the blessings. I had always paid my tithing, but I had never really had to SACRIFICE to pay it. I left her home praying that the Lord would bless her. It was a test for me as a young missionary to promise her the Lord's blessings if she would exercise her faith and pay her tithing. That next Sunday she did pay her tithing. The very next day she received a phone call from a neighbor. The neighbor asked her to tend her child a few hours each day. It was unheard of for an older Russian woman in the Baltics to have a job, and this job provided Nina with the difference in what she had paid in tithing. The Windows of Heaven are not just cash in the mailbox. The Windows of Heaven include the capacity to earn and to work.

I heard in a RS meeting after my mission, “I have never experienced a miracle after paying my tithing.” I question you, have you REALLY needed it? Tithing is a principle of faith. It must be paid, and our faith exercised, before we receive the blessings. Most, if not all of us have our temporal needs met, even in these difficult times. If we did not the Lord would provide.

For those of you who feel you have not experienced miracles from paying your tithing consider this story told by a Japanese woman.

“My family and I were spending a day at the Japan Alps National Park . ... I was pregnant with our fourth child and was feeling rather tired, so I lay down under the trees. ... I began thinking about our financial problems. My heart became overwhelmed, and I burst into tears. ‘Lord, we are full-tithe payers. We have sacrificed so much. When will the windows of heaven open unto us and our burdens be lightened?’

“I prayed with all my heart. Then I turned to watch my husband and children playing and laughing together. ... Suddenly, the Spirit testified to me that my blessings were abundant and that my family was the greatest blessing Heavenly Father could give me.”

With gratitude we need to recognize the miracles in our lives and recognize that all that we have is a Gift from the Lord. Paying tithing is an opportunity to acknowledge our Gratitude to Heavenly Father for all of our blessings. President Monson’s talk in General Conference just last month was titled “The Divine Gift of Gratitude.” He said, “My brothers and sisters, do we remember to give thanks for the blessings we receive? Sincerely giving thanks not only helps us recognize our blessings, but it also unlocks the doors of heaven and helps us feel God’s love.” In Doctrine and Covenants 59 the Lord declared “Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things. ...“And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things.”

President Monson also taught: “Do material possessions make us happy and grateful? Perhaps momentarily. However, those things which provide deep and lasting happiness and gratitude are the things which money cannot buy: our families, the gospel, good friends, our health, our abilities, the love we receive from those around us. Unfortunately, these are some of the things we allow ourselves to take for granted.”

Elder Robert D. Hales says: “Tithing develops and tests our faith. By sacrificing to the Lord what we may think we need or want for ourselves, we learn to rely on Him. . . We learn to trust that what we have been given, through the blessings of the Lord and our own diligent efforts, is sufficient for our needs. . .The commandment to pay tithing requires temporal sacrifice, which ultimately yields great spiritual blessings. . . The temporal and spiritual blessings of tithing are specifically tailored to us and our families, according to the Lord’s will.”

I want to share a story that was written in the Friend a few years ago. Children, listen carefully to this true story. It happened more than 100 years ago, but think about how you would feel if this was you:

Marcella frowned as she tried to wiggle her toes in her shoes. The shoes were too small and they hurt, but she knew she shouldn’t complain. At six years old, she knew there was no money for new ones.

The past year had been hard for the Nelson family. In May, Marcella's tiny baby sister had died of pneumonia. And just six weeks later, her father, Eric, had been killed in an accident at work. How she missed her gentle father.

Now Marcella's mother was struggling to support her two young daughters with her sewing. Even though she was a skilled seamstress, there wasn't enough money. The kitchen cupboards in their small home were practically bare.

"Time for breakfast," Mother called. Marcella struggled not to limp in the tight shoes as she walked to the table.

"Oh, honey." Her mother knelt at her side. "Those shoes are too small for you, aren't they?" Marcella could hear the worry in her mother's voice.

"A little." Marcella tried to sound unconcerned. "It's all right."

"I want new shoes too!" piped up little Arvella.

Their mother picked Arvella up in a big hug. "You know your shoes are just fine," she said. Arvella's shoes were hand-me-downs from Marcella. They were worn, but at least they fit properly.

Suddenly Mother became serious again. "Girls," she said slowly, "we need to go to town today. I have \$2.50."

Marcella couldn't believe it! That was a lot of money in Utah in 1905. "That's great!" she exclaimed. She imagined the food they could buy to stock their empty shelves. Maybe she could even get new shoes!

Marcella's smile faded when she saw the tears in her mother's eyes. "We owe \$2.50 for tithing," she said softly. Then she gathered her girls around her. "I know we are almost out of food. I know that you need new shoes so badly, Marcella. But if we want the Lord to bless us, we must keep His commandments."

Then she pulled out her worn Bible and turned to Malachi. She read to the girls the Lord's promise that if they paid tithing, the windows of heaven would open to them.

"What does it mean that the windows of heaven will open?" Arvella asked.

"It means that Heavenly Father will bless us," Mother said. "It says that we will receive such a great blessing that there won't be room enough to receive it. I know that we need the Lord's blessing now more than ever. I believe His promise."

The girls and Mother knelt and prayed before leaving for the bishops house. Mother asked Heavenly Father for a way to get more food for her little family and shoes for Marcella. After the prayer, they all wiped tears from their eyes. Then, with a smile, Mother said, "Let's go pay our tithing, girls!"

They walked the short distance to the bishop's house and gave him the tithing. Although her feet hurt, Marcella enjoyed the walk and the good feeling in her heart. She knew Heavenly Father would bless them.

Later that afternoon, after returning from the bishop's house, Marcella was surprised to hear a delivery cart outside. It stopped at their home, and a delivery boy came to the door. "A delivery for Sarah Nelson," he said.

"That's my mother," Marcella said.

"But I didn't order anything," Mother objected.

Suddenly Uncle Silas appeared in the doorway next to the boy. "It's for you, Sarah," he said gently. "You can put everything here on the table," he directed the delivery boy.

The boy brought in bags of food. The girls danced around the table in delight. They hugged Uncle Silas, who quickly excused himself to go home. There was so much food! Sugar, beans, flour and cornmeal, cured meats and dried fruit—the cupboards would be full! Last of all, the delivery boy brought a small package wrapped in brown paper to the table.

After the delivery boy left, the girls approached the small package. What could be inside? First Marcella and then Arvella shook it. Then Marcella carefully pulled back the paper. Into her lap fell not one, but two pairs of shoes! Marcella picked up the largest pair and put them on. They fit perfectly, and she happily wiggled her toes in complete comfort.

Then she saw Arvella's face. Her sister had picked up the second pair of shoes and was staring at them in delight. She looked at her mother in wonder. "I thought you said I didn't need shoes, Mama," she said questioningly.

"Your old shoes would do," her mother said through her tears. "But when Heavenly Father opens the windows of heaven, you never know what might pour down."

This family exercised their faith in paying their tithing and the windows of heaven opened and blessed them. Yet there is another side of this story, what about Uncle Silas? Heavenly Father used him as an instrument to bless this family. May we all listen to the spirit so that we can be the means of answering people's prayers so that Heavenly Father can use us to help Him.

The Prophet Joseph Smith once said, "A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation." He continues, "Those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith." President Faust added, "To be faithful members of this Church requires sacrifice and

consecration. It means that worldly pleasures and earthly possessions should not be our principal aim in life, because the gift of eternal life requires a willingness to sacrifice all we have and are in order to obtain it.”

I hope that this Thanksgiving week we can remember from whom all of our blessings come. We have so much! . . .