

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz Production
Week 32
Alma 39-42

I heard someone say the other day that fear and faith both want the same thing from us: They both want us to believe in something that hasn't happened yet. Think about that. This is why we can't have fear and faith at the same time. They both require the same thing from us but one fosters hope and the other anxiety.

In these chapters this week Almas receives an incredible revelation. God answered his prayers and ours to know what it will be like in the world to come. In a realm unknown and unseeable. God tells us what it will be like when we pass from this mortal experience and into the spirit world. In doing so this can extinguish fear or increase it, depending on your current state of spirituality. Let me explain what I mean.

In Alma 40 verses 12 and 13 he says:

“**12** And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of **happiness**, which is called **paradise**, a state of rest, a state of **peace**, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow.
13 And then shall it come to pass, that the **spirits** of the wicked, yea, who are evil—for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they chose evil works rather than good; therefore the spirit of the **devil** did enter into them, and take possession of their house—and these shall be cast out into **outer darkness**; there shall be **weeping**, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and this because of their own iniquity, being led captive by the will of the devil.”

These verses simply tell us that whoever we chose to be in this life, that we will continue to be the same in the next life. We will take with us our vices, our addictions, our habits. But, we will not have all of the worldly possessions to fulfill these addictions.

This is what Paul taught in Colossians 3 verses 1 and 2:

“**1** If ye then be **risen** with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your **affection** on **things above**, not on things on the **earth**.”

This got me thinking. If we live our mortal lives in a state of misery does that mean that we will continue to be miserable in the next life? If we are constantly frustrated and disappointed, angry and dissatisfied, does that mean we will continue to live for eternity the same?

On the other hand, if we choose to be happy, easy going, forgiving, in peace, will we continue like that for the rest of our lives? And I believe that the answer is yes.

So, how do we do that? Well, here are a few thoughts for you to chew on:

The happiness and the joy you experience in this life have very little to do with you.

This truly is one of the paradoxes of life.

In Matthew 10 verse 39 Jesus taught:

“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

Here is a story that will help illustrate this point: Years ago a school teacher gave all of her students a balloon. She asked them each to write their name on the balloon. She then took them out into the hallway and asked them to release it. They all floated to the ceiling and bounced around against each other. They then went back into the classroom to continue learning. After a while she told them that now she wanted them to all go out into the hallway and find their balloon. But there was a twist. They only had 60 seconds to accomplish the task. The timer was set and the frenzy began. Each student searching for the balloon that had their name on it. After the minute was up they were asked to come back into the classroom. If you were able to find your balloon, the teacher instructed please stand up. No one stood. Not a single person was able to find their name. Ok, the teacher said. Now then, I would like you all to go back into the hallway and I would like each of you to pick any balloon and then find the person that the balloon belongs to and give it to them. This time I will not set a timer but I will be timing you to see how fast you can each get your own balloon. Ready, go! The students all ran out into the hallway, picked any random balloon and found the person whom it belonged to. Once they gave out their balloon and received their own they went back into the classroom and sat down. To their surprise, each student returned to their seat with the task completed within 30 seconds.

This story teaches us that the more we seek after our own interests, the harder it is to find what we are looking for. But, when we seek the interests of others we seem to find what we need a lot faster.

Another way we lose our sense of peace and joy is in comparing ourselves to others.

In a landmark address, and seriously one of the best talks I've ever heard J.B Haws in a BYU devotional said this:

“This tendency to compare is something that I think about all the time because I do it all the time. But even that statement is a bit misleading. Saying, “I do it all the time,” is like saying, “I breathe all the time.” It just happens without me thinking about it. It can almost feel reflexive—almost *natural*. And that is the point. That is why it is so vexatious. We know from Mosiah 3 that when we are left to our “natural” state, we struggle to “[yield] to the enticings of the Holy Spirit.”² We are not where God wants

us to be, and we are not what He knows we *can* be. We are in opposition to Him, at cross-purposes to His plan. But also, because these comparisons seem to happen so naturally, I hope that we all feel like fellow travelers on this road.

I feel this with the force of truth: our perfect, loving God makes no horizontal comparisons. Jesus only compared me with old me.

Here is a more contemporary example from President Boyd K. Packer's time as a mission president:

I needed a new assistant and had prayed much about the matter. I then called zone conferences, where I met and interviewed every missionary, always with the thought in my mind, "Is this the man?" The answer finally came: "This is the man." He was appointed. He had been permitted to come on a mission only after some considerable shaping up to become eligible.

After the announcement one of the zone leaders came to see me privately. He came from the same community in the West as did the new assistant. He was obviously disturbed. His first question was, "Do you really know the elder you have appointed as your assistant?"

"Yes, Elder. I know all that you know about him, and a good deal more," was my answer.

"Why, then, was he appointed your assistant?"

I pondered for a moment and then said, "Elder, why don't you ask the question that you came to ask?"

"What do you mean?"

"Ask the question that is really on your mind," I encouraged.

"But I did," he said.

"No," I said. "There is another question. The thing that is on your mind is not 'Why did you appoint him as your assistant'; it is 'Why did you not appoint me?'"

Now please understand. I thought his unexpressed question to be a very logical and sensible one. . . .

. . . I had sympathy for this young man and admired him greatly for his courage to speak.

“If you should ask why you were not chosen,” I said, “I would have to answer, ‘I do not know, Elder.’ I only know that he was chosen. Perhaps he may fail. But at least I know he is the one with the combination of talents and ability and qualities best calculated to get done what the office needs at the moment.

“This is no reflection upon you. You may yet preside over him and many above him. You may be his bishop or his stake president. You may preside over the Church. I do not know. But his call is no reflection upon you. Do not be injured by it.

“Go back to work and serve the Lord. Sustain him,” I counseled. “Your contest is not with him but with yourself.”⁶

I need to read that golden line again: “Your contest is not with him but with yourself.”

Or, put another way, here is Elder Jeffrey R. Holland on this:

[God] doesn't measure our talents or our looks; He doesn't measure our professions or our possessions. He cheers on every runner, calling out that the race is against sin, not against each other.⁷

These are such important statements. They are the type of statements that I want emblazoned on my mind, that I want written on the “fleshy tables of [my] heart.”⁸ Just repeating a sentence like “your contest is not with him but with yourself” or “the race is against sin, *not* against each other” feels like verbal aloe vera on our sunburned souls. It soothes, it cools, and we feel tense muscles relax.”

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/j-b-haws/wrestling-with-comparisons/>

See, the point is that we figure out now how to be happy, how to have peace and joy in our lives. By losing ourselves in the service of others is how we achieve this goal. It so happens to also be the path to having a relationship with our Savior.

Of this great truth I testify. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.