

Come Follow Me Podcast
Elo Viz Production
Week 8
2 Nephi 6-10

These chapters start the words of Jacob. Jacob expounds the words of Isaiah and then teaches his people what they mean. In chapter 9 he addresses a frightening topic: the Judgment day. There are a million different emotions that people can feel when tackling this subject. What will it be like? How will I do? Brad Wilcox gives a somewhat commercial visualization of what he used to envision this day would be like for him in his talk called "His grace is Sufficient ". It is one of my favorite talks given by him.

<https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/brad-wilcox/his-grace-is-sufficient/>

But it is a serious matter. One that we will all have to face one day. This is what Jacob says about it in Chapter 9:

“15 And it shall come to pass that when all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, insomuch as they have become immortal, they must appear before the [judgment-seat](#) of the Holy One of Israel; and then cometh the [judgment](#), and then must they be judged according to the holy judgment of God.” (2 Nephi 9:15)

Sounds terrifying if you ask me. But there is a further explanation a few verses later that give us hope:

“18 But, behold, the [righteous](#), the [saints](#) of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the [crosses](#) of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall [inherit](#) the [kingdom](#) of God, which was prepared for them [from](#) the foundation of the world, and their [joy](#) shall be full [forever](#).” (2 Nephi 9:18)

That “forever joy” sounds pretty appealing. A description that leaves us all longing for this gift that comes to the righteous and saintly. But... What does that mean? Who is He really talking about? How does one become righteous and saintly, how does one endure the crosses of the world and despise the shame of it? Well, Jesus himself taught of this judgment day during his earthly ministry. And his explanation is simple yet powerful. In Luke 6 this is what the Master said:

“37 [Judge not](#), and ye shall not be judged: (It's that simple, But just in case we didn't quite understand what He is saying he goes on and says it two other ways just to drive home His point), [condemn](#) not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be [forgiven](#).”(Luke 6:37)

How liberating... how freeing if we take the words of Jesus literally. This was the center of his whole ministry. Everywhere He went He had the opportunity to judge, to condemn, to correct. But He didn't! The creator of this universe who knows all things from the beginning to the end, who is familiar with every emotion, and feeling, chose in His infinite wisdom to withhold judgment and to show forth love. And He asks that we do the same. Remember when He said. "34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love** one another; (and don't forget the last line of this incredible verse) as I have loved you."(John 13:34)

We are to love as Jesus loved. But how? How do we do that? That's a great question. Do you want to know the answer? Here it is:

"**Judge not**, and ye shall not be judged" (Luke 6:37)

If we can learn this one thing, then we can have that forever joy that Jacob is talking about. That Eternal bliss and happiness.

Judgment is a worldwide disease that is plaguing us all. It is destroying families, friendships, cities and counties. And we have to try and stop it as much as we can. And the only cure for this disease, our only hope is to embrace the character of Christ and to show forth empathy. I believe that empathy is the practical application of the principle of charity. Think about it, charity is the pure love of Christ. Empathy is the outward expression of our inward love and acceptance of others. And it gives us the tools to communicate that love through understanding, support and forgiveness.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-principles/chapter-30-charity?lang=eng>

I've said this before but empathy truly is a superpower. And it is the complete opposite of Judgment. Our worst form of empathy is a million times stronger than our best form of judgment.

Here are some stories that illustrate this point.

When my oldest son was little, I was very hard on him. I expected him to be perfect. I would take every opportunity to tell him how you could be better, where he had failed and how to fix it. This dynamic really hurt our relationship, he didn't like me at all and I was constantly disappointed in him. One day when I was sitting in a Sunday school class our bishop at the time Louie Hamner said this: "You don't need to tell people what they are doing wrong because they already know". This statement shocked me. I thought it was my mission to tell everyone what they were doing wrong, if I didn't they would not be able to get better because I didn't believe people knew what they were doing, otherwise they would have done something different. (this point of view is rooted in pride, the great sin). I decided that I would give it a try, because if it didn't work our relationship couldn't get any worse. So, for several weeks I would bite my tongue and not correct my son. And any time he would talk about a problem or a situation or even a

joyful moment I would keep my option to myself and only express empathy when we communicate. I realized this was a super power when one day I was out of town and he came home from school and it had been a rough day for him. My wife asked if he wanted to talk about it and he said to her: "No... I think I will wait until Dad gets home, he is the only one that gets me." I cried on the phone that night when my wife told me what he said. That night I realized that this was more than just a practice or a way to make friends. It was what we all needed to learn in order to become more Christ-like. It was a way of life! a change in ourselves that allows us to see others as God sees them. With love, patience, and forgiveness. And these are the emotions that we must feel in order to be empathetic with others.

That experience warms my heart and rejuvenates my resolve to show more empathy every time I think about it. But there is another side of this. The ugly side of judgment, that is a more familiar story.

A friend of mine relayed this experience to me: Many years ago my friend and his wife had one of their children come to them and explain that they were struggling with a habit of looking at inappropriate images on the internet. As loving and faithful parents would do they put their arm around him and said to this young man. "Thank you for coming to us about this. We will help you through this. We love you and are here to help you in every way possible." They had a great conversation and came up with a plan to help him kick this addiction. The young man was relieved and hopeful. But then, at the end of their conversation my friend and his wife were shocked when their son said to them: "man, if I knew it would have been this easy, I would have come to you two years ago." Two years...their son had been struggling with this addiction. My friend then told me of the internal struggle he was facing. "What did I do, (he said) that would stop my son from coming to me for two years? When they asked him. This is what he said, listen carefully, he said: "I didn't believe it was safe. Because you were getting mad at me over the smallest things. Like my room not being clean or when I was a few minutes late for curfew, or even when I accidentally spilled something you would get angry with me. And I thought that if you were getting so mad over these seemingly small things, how much worse will it be when I tell you about this real problem that I am struggling with. What an eye opening experience.

Every action, or every utilization of agency has a consequence assigned to it, a judgment attached by God. God has already done His work in fulfilling his justice with that person. Why do we feel the need to take God's role from Him and cast our finite judgmental view over His omnipotent grace.

"10 I, the Lord, will **forgive** whom I will forgive, (The Savior declared) but of you it is required to **forgive** all men." (D&C 64:10)

Here is the problem. As latter day saints who have the truthfulness of the gospel we sometimes feel that it is our responsibility, no, our duty to let everyone else know what that truth is. So we walk around with our truth radar on and tell them about all the things that we think they don't know. Of course we are discrete about it but our children follow our examples and are not so cunning with their words. I remember how embarrassed I was when my son was little and we walked past a man smoking and my son called out to him. "Hey, Smoking is bad for you." As if somehow this older gentleman was not as educated as much as my 3 year old son.

I don't believe we do this maliciously or even with the intent to hurt others. We simply see something being done that we ourselves would not do and a judgment just flies out of our mouth without even thinking about it. We've all done it, and we have all had it done to us. And it is the number one reason that people leave the church. My mom sent me this insightful quote the other day, a lesson by Arianna Freelen called "Sometimes Church is hard". This is a condensed version of what she wrote:

Church is hard for the person walking through the doors, afraid of judgment.

Church is hard for the pastor's family, under the microscope of an entire body.

Church is hard for the prodigal soul returning home, broken and battered by the world.

Church is hard for the girl who looks like she has it all together, but doesn't.

Church is hard for the couple who fought the entire ride to service.

Church is hard for the single mom, surrounded by couples holding hands, and seemingly perfect families.

Church is hard for the widow and widower with no invitation to lunch after service.

Church is hard for the man insecure in his role as a leader.

Church is hard for the wife who longs to be led by a righteous man.

Church is hard for the nursery volunteer who desperately longs for a baby to love.

Church is hard for the single woman and single man, praying God brings them a mate.

Church is hard for the teenage girl, wearing a scarlet letter, ashamed of her mistakes.

Church is hard for gays, adulterers, liars, cheats, and slanderers.

But, here is the beauty of church—

Church isn't a building, mentality, or expectation.

Church is a body.

Church is a group of sinners, saved by grace, living in fellowship as saints.

Church is a body of believers bound as brothers and sisters by an eternal love.

Church is a holy ground where sinners stand as equals before the Throne of Grace.

Church is a refuge for broken hearts and a training ground for mighty warriors.

Church is a converging of confrontation and invitation. Where sin is confronted and hearts are invited to seek restoration.

Church is a lesson in faith and trust.

Church is a bearer of burdens and a giver of hope.

Church is a family. A family coming together, setting aside differences, forgetting past mistakes, rejoicing in the smallest of victories.

Church is the body, and the circle of sinners-turned-saints, is where He resides, and if we ask, He is faithful to come.

So even on the hard days at church—

The days when I am at odds with a sister. When I've fought with my husband because we're late once again. When I've walked in bearing burdens heavier than my heart can handle, yet masking the pain with a smile on my face. When I've worn a scarlet letter, under the microscope. When I've longed for a baby to hold, or fought tears as the lyrics were sung. When I've walked back in, afraid and broken, after walking away.

I'll remember, He has never failed to meet me there.

<https://herviewfromhome.com/church-is-hard/>

We have all heard the saying that the church is a hospital for the sinner and not a museum for the saints. Yet, somehow we all hold others to a higher standard than we hold ourselves. Today I invite you to let it go. Treat others as if it is one of their hardest days in mortality, and most of the time you will be right. For this moment and all the moments to come, I plead with you to lay down your crown of judgment and put on the His robe of grace. I ask you to swallow your tongue of fire and speak with a tongue of an angel, a tongue of empathy.

Then when that day comes, the great and dreadful day of the Lord's judgment, we will find that as we refuse to judge others in this mortal realm, He, the Savior of the World, will not condemn or judge you and your joy will be full forever. Of this great truth I testify, In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.