

AFRICA SOUTHEAST LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Gratitude: The Exalting and Required Virtue

By Elder Stanley G. Ellis

First Counselor in the Africa Southeast Area Presidency



Elder Stanley G. Ellis

Joseph Smith (1805–44) is quoted as saying that if you will thank the Lord with all your heart every night for all the blessings of that day you will eventually find yourself exalted in the kingdom of God.¹ When I first heard that quote, it impressed me. First, what a wonderful promise for being truly grateful! But secondly, I wondered how that could be possible for something so seemingly small and simple.

The more I considered it, the better I came to understand the power of being really thankful. The Lord actually makes the same promise in Doctrine and Covenants 78:19: “he

who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious.”

The Guide to the Scriptures teaches us that “expressing gratitude is pleasing to God, and true worship includes thanking him. We should give thanks to the Lord for all things.”² As the hymn teaches us, as we count our many blessings, especially one by one, we can be surprised what the Lord has done.³

On the other hand, being unthankful is actually one of the few ways we offend our normally loving, kind, and generous Heavenly Father. Consider what He has done for us:

“And inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances, not with much laughter, for this is sin, but with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance—

“Verily I say, that inasmuch as ye do this, the fulness of the earth is yours, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which climbeth upon the trees and walketh upon the earth;

“Yea, and the herb, and the good things which come of the earth, whether for food or for raiment, or for houses, or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards;



“Gratitude turns what we have into enough.”

Joseph Smith said that if you will thank the Lord with all your heart every night for all the blessings of that day you will eventually find yourself exalted in the kingdom of God.



“Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart;

“Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul.

“And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion” (D&C 59:15–20).

Therefore it is easy to see why our being ungrateful is so offensive to Him: “And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments” (D&C 59:21).

The Apostle Paul taught a great truth about a key blessing of gratitude, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both

how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” (Philippians 4:11–12). Further, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:6–7).

Alma reminded himself that “I ought to be content with the things the Lord hath allotted unto me” (Alma 29:3).

Our daughter Rachel made a pillow for Sister Ellis with a profound cross-stitched message: “Gratitude turns what we have into enough.” In fact, as you think about it, it is not what we have that makes us unhappy; it is what we perceive we don’t have. Gratitude is clearly a key to happiness regardless of our circumstances.

The scriptures clearly direct us to be thankful: “be ye thankful” (Colossians

3:15); “live in thanksgiving daily” (Alma 34:38); “ye must give thanks unto God” (D&C 46:32); “and in everything give thanks” (D&C 98:1).

May we enjoy peace, contentment, humility, and happiness as we choose each day to be grateful. ■

NOTES

1. See Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (1989), 104.
2. Guide to the Scriptures, “Thankful, Thanks, Thanksgiving.”
3. See “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241.

EDITOR’S NOTE

The Africa Southeast Area has a website that publishes messages from the Area Presidency as well as inspirational stories from members in Africa. Please visit us at africase.lds.org. ■

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

Understanding Gospel Principles That Lead Us to the Temple

By Elder L. Jean Claude Mabaya

Area Seventy

The Creation

Have you ever wondered where this world came from? It is well-organized with days and nights, waters and lands, plants and animals,

fish and birds, and, finally, beautiful, loving people who bring joy and harmony to life on earth. Have you ever wondered who created it all? From prophets, both ancient and

modern, we learn of the purpose of creation and that it was all planned in a premortal council, where it was decided, “We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of



Elder L. Jean Claude
Mabaya



these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:24–25).

The Creation is an integral part of our Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation. It not only shows us God’s wonderful creations but also gives us the opportunity to come to earth and receive a physical body and learn to act and not be acted upon, or in other words, to exercise our agency and choose to be obedient. Before we were born we lived with our Heavenly Father, the Father of our spirits. All who are born in this life are literally spirit brothers and sisters in God’s family. Our happiness is secured with the knowledge of who we are, where we come from and where we can go. We are eternal beings, spirit children of an Eternal God. By divine decree, we have received gifts and unique talents that help us fulfill our divine destiny as spirit children of God.

God’s True Nature and Personality

God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, created this earth and everything upon it.¹ The Father is the Supreme Being in whom we believe and whom we worship. He is a just God. He is omnipotent

and omniscient. He sent His Son, who is full of love, mercy, charity, and compassion. The Father devised the plan of salvation for our happiness. Through His Atonement, His Son became the finisher of His Father’s plan.

Knowledge of God’s divine nature allows us to know Him, to understand Him, to love Him, to be dependent on Him, and to have a greater faith in His divinity. Modern revelation teaches us that God, the Eternal Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, have a tangible body of flesh and bones and that the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, without flesh or bones.”² “If men do not comprehend the character of God they do not comprehend themselves.”³

If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments

An exact knowledge of God’s true nature and personality helps us become like Him. Believing in His true nature strengthens a true faith in Him. Obedience to His laws by entering into and keeping covenants with Him through His ordinances, such as baptism and the endowment, also helps us know Him.

We are grateful to Him and serve Him as we journey along our chosen path. At our baptism, we also covenant to serve others. It is a great blessing and opportunity to be called to serve in the Church. As we serve, we progress spiritually and feel joy in following the example of Jesus and in keeping His commandments.

Service to Others Makes Our Burdens Light

Bonds of friendship and love are created with the people whom we serve. As we reach out to others on the path of eternal life, we notice that our burdens become lighter and our determination to continue the journey increases.

Obedience Brings Blessings

God’s blessings have no feet to walk and come to us. We should not sit idly by waiting for them but rather exercise our faith to attract them to us through our obedience and firm commitment to the high principles of the gospel. The search for lasting happiness on earth inspires the desire to work to obtain eternal life, which is the greatest blessing that God has for His children.

Latter-day Saints strive to live eternally in the presence of God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Here they will inherit celestial glory and will help others to also receive this great blessing. To live in the presence of God is the result of a life of righteousness and firm determination.

The Temple

Bookends on the path of eternal progression are baptism, which is the gate, and exaltation, or life with God, which should be the end goal of

every Latter-day Saint. Along the way is a sacred place we call the temple. We cannot bypass it if we want to achieve the goal. It is the sacred place in which saving ordinances are performed and covenants are made. “The Lord will bless us as we attend to the sacred ordinance work of the temples. Blessings there will not be limited to our temple service. We will be blessed in all of our affairs.”⁴ For God said, “And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7). ■

NOTES

1. See Moses 2:1.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:22–23.
3. Joseph Smith, in Discourse, 7 April 1844, as reported by Willard Richards, josephsmithpapers.org.
4. Boyd K. Packer, “The Holy Temple,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2010, 35.

CALL FOR ARTICLES

Your local pages section is produced by members in your own area under the guidance of the Area Presidency so as to address the needs and experiences of members where you live. We would like to share YOUR story and invite you to contribute your faith-promoting thoughts and experiences by contacting your local editor through the Africa Southeast Area website africase.lds.org or by email africasecommunications@gmail.com. ■

LOCAL NEWS

A Journey of Faith to Obtain Temple Blessings

By Sister Cherrie Blake

Church history senior missionary

A broken bus, insurgents in the countryside, ill health, language challenges, and a long 40-hour bus ride didn’t stop 18 families from the Beira Mozambique Stake. They made the arduous journey to the Johannesburg South Africa Temple for their long-anticipated temple blessings in January 2017.

Huge challenges were all overcome through the blessings of the Lord and the patience and faith of the Church members. Beira Stake president, Freeman Dickie, told of how the two-month truce, signed in December 2016 between insurgent groups in the countryside of Mozambique, made it possible for the group to come to the temple by way of Maputo in the south. He said, “Without the truce, less than half of the members would have been able to come, as we then would have had to travel through Zimbabwe where few could get visas.”

The anticipated 30-hour bus ride turned into 40 long hours with bus problems which were finally solved in Maputo. Their late arrival at 4:30 in the morning made it a long wait outside the temple so they could register for patron housing. Because of their late arrival, they were advised to rest in their rooms for several hours.

During that time, two young mothers were so anxious to show their daughters the beautiful temple on the hill that they ventured out after a short rest. Not knowing directions and speaking no English, they still made their desire to find the temple known. It was a thrilling moment for them when they were able to see the beautiful temple. As they returned to their rooms, the mothers and daughters were radiant with the Spirit from just seeing the exterior of the temple.

**Johannesburg
Temple at night**



Amongst the travelers was Raphael Cherequejune, who was one of the first people to be baptized in Beira, Mozambique, in 1997. He said, “This has been a miraculous experience, and I have prepared for a long time. I thought at first I would not be able to come, but thanks to the Lord I am here.”



Eighteen families from Mozambique braved a 40-hour bus ride to receive their ordinances in Johannesburg.

Raphael's wife, Sister Maria Regina Japela Cupia, relayed one of the blessings she received in coming to the temple. She commented to the translator that normally she would be very sick on long trips, but on this journey she felt fine. She also added, "I am so happy to be here; to be sealed to my husband and our four children."

Anticipating the arrival of the Saints from Beira, the Johannesburg Temple workers anxiously searched to find people who could speak Portuguese to assist the members coming to the temple, since most of them did not speak English. Elder Phil Hagedorn, a temple missionary from Idaho, USA, told how Elder Holt, who had recently served in the Maputo Mozambique Mission, stopped at the temple with his mother on his return to the United States that day. He served as an interpreter for the Saints from Beira when needed. Sister Rosie Hagedorn told of a sister temple worker who could speak Portuguese. When that sister heard

that she was needed, she dropped everything and went to the temple to help. Sister Hagedorn said, "The Lord provides what is needed to bless the people."

That momentous Tuesday afternoon and evening in the temple was crowned with the sealing ordinances of spouses and families. Elder Stanley G. Ellis, the First Counselor in the Africa Southeast Area, speaks fluent Portuguese. He stayed for many

hours to perform the ordinances so the Saints would be blessed to hear them in their own language.

At the end of their time in Johannesburg, the Saints from Beira returned to their bus for the



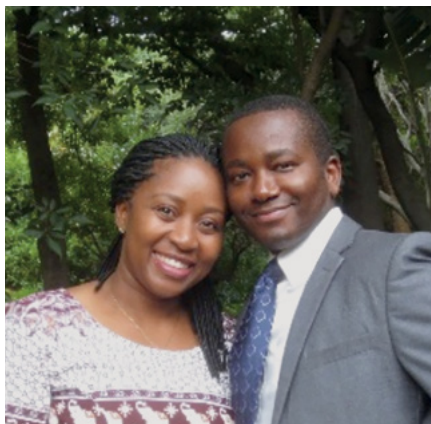
Raphael Cherequejane was one of the first people who converted to the Church in Beira, Mozambique.



Raphael with his family at the Johannesburg Temple

long ride home with smiles of joy on their faces. Everyone who saw them could feel the happiness that they felt. Sister Maria Regina Cherequejune said, “We want to return to the temple someday.”

Brother Raphael reflected on the journey and said, “I feel very happy. This happiness comes from the gospel. I have had the opportunity to be part of sacred ordinances. I have also made covenants that I will fight to keep.” This was indeed a journey of faith for the Saints of Mozambique so they could obtain their temple blessings. ■



President & Sister Freeman Dickie organized and accompanied the group.

shop, the missionaries commented on his picture of the Savior and said they wanted to tell him about the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was interested, as he was not attending any church at the time. He had visited several churches but explained, “When I went to those churches, my heart was not there.” He knew that someday he would find the right church, as his father had said, so he invited the elders to his home.

They met with the Kapenda family, which included his wife and their two young children, Joseph and Charlotte. The missionaries began teaching them the gospel. When they gave Brother Kapenda a Book of Mormon in French, he read diligently.

The family visited the Ladysmith LDS Church for the first time and to everyone’s surprise, Brother Kapenda was called upon to pray. He accepted, praying to know the truthfulness of the gospel. It was his first time giving a public prayer. After the family returned home, their young son Joseph said, “This is the church we must go to!” Brother Kapenda agreed, stating, “All week I was blessed.” As they progressed in the missionary lessons, their testimonies of the restored gospel grew, and both Brother and Sister Kapenda accepted the invitation to be baptized just one month later.

After his parents were baptized, young Joseph could hardly wait until he was old enough for his turn. His father had been counseled by the branch president to teach and prepare

Picture in the Barbershop

By Elder David Wilding and Sister Doris Wilding

Senior Missionaries

Sometimes an introduction to the gospel begins with something very simple, like a picture of Jesus Christ displayed in a barbershop.

This was the case with Brother and Sister Kapenda, who moved to South Africa from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. Like many others, they came to South Africa looking for work opportunities and government stability. Before they left the Congo, Brother Kapenda’s father had prophetically told him, “When you go to South Africa, you will find the church that is right for you.”

They settled into Ladysmith, where Brother Kapenda worked out of a little

pink wooden shack that served as his barbershop on the main road through the busy, bustling town. On the wall of his barbershop he displayed a picture of Jesus that everyone passing by could see.

One June day, Elder Hilton from Utah, USA, and Elder Hensen from Idaho, USA, were walking past the barbershop when they noticed the picture. At first they walked on by, but they later felt impressed to go back.

Brother Kapenda was across the street when the missionaries first walked by, but when he saw them return, he crossed the street to meet them. When he identified himself as the owner of the

his son for baptism, and Joseph was an eager learner who asked a lot of questions. Joseph wanted to be a missionary when he grew up. He immediately became an enthusiastic little member-missionary, talking about the Book of Mormon and the Church to all of his neighbors and friends, and inviting them to church.

Many came, which antagonized the local pastors who actively denounced the Church, stating, "They don't even have a cross on their church!" Brother Kapenda learned to respond: "Though we don't wear or have a cross on our buildings, we respect it as Christian symbol. However, we prefer to emphasize the Resurrection rather than the death of the Savior."

The family found happiness through friendship and callings, which helped

them learn more about the gospel. The family received an additional blessing when Sister Kapenda gave birth to their third child, John. Brother Kapenda was a joyful man as he returned to his home in Zambia for business. He was mindful that young Joseph's eighth birthday was coming up and his son was anxious for his father to baptize him as soon as he returned.

Unfortunately, Joseph became ill and, as the week went on, he worsened and died. The family plunged into grief. Church members tried to console them and express their love by singing hymns to comfort the family and invite the Spirit. They offered assurance that Joseph was with his Father in Heaven, the Savior, and other relatives who had passed on. Joseph's school class came and sang farewell songs to their

classmate, with tears rolling down their cheeks. The service was a wonderful tribute to a spiritual little boy who was close to his Father in Heaven. Brother Kapenda placed Joseph's treasured scriptures in the casket with him. Joseph had been anxiously awaiting his baptismal day, but he died two weeks before the date arrived.

Because the Kapendas had now been members of the Church for a year, they could go to the temple to receive their endowments and be sealed together as an eternal family. They did their own temple ordinances the first day at the temple. The second day was Joseph's big day; his father was to be baptized and confirmed for him. Those who attended felt impressed that Joseph's shining spirit was present. Afterwards, the directing temple worker commented that he had "not often felt such a strong spirit as a baptism was being performed." Joseph Kapenda was baptized at last.

The family then had the glorious experience of being sealed together. The guests waited in the sealing room as the two children, reverent and beautifully dressed all in white, were brought in. A special missionary served as proxy for Joseph, and Brother Kapenda later said he absolutely felt Joseph's presence there. An eternal family was formed, and it all started with a picture of the Savior displayed in a barbershop. ■

An alternate account of this story can be found in the July 2014 Liahona local pages.



◀ *Brother Kapenda's barbershop where he had the picture of Jesus on the wall.*

▶ *The Kapenda Family on the day of their sealing*



Joseph Kapenda



“Ye Cannot Serve God and Mammon”

By Shelagh Pike

I grew up in England, and after the war my parents decided to immigrate to South Africa. I had previously attended church in England, but soon after arriving in South Africa, I married and didn't attend church because I was too busy with my seven children. Once the older children were at school, I briefly attended my old church, but it didn't mean anything to me. We lived in Cape Town and every weekend we would go for a drive, but I felt that this was no way to spend Sundays. I longed to know the right church to belong to.

As the years went by, I felt that there was a right church somewhere, and in my mind I could even see its position on the main road. Once the children had gone to bed at night I would sit outside in the swing, looking at the stars, and think of the Creator of all of these worlds. Then I would pray to find the right church where I could be His disciple. I remembered a promise that I had made as a child that no matter what happened, I would always come back to Him.

I would read the Bible and try to find passages that would guide me. I was led by the Spirit to place the photographs of my ancestors on the mantelpiece. I knew in my heart that those photographs would soon achieve significance and help me find what I was searching for.

One morning, I looked through the front window and saw two young men coming slowly across the road, looking rather uncertain. I knew they were

coming to my house. The Mormon missionaries introduced themselves and I invited them in. They brought with them a beautiful spirit which I recognised as being of God. That morning they taught me the first lesson and came back the next week. I learned about the plan of happiness and the importance of the temple ordinances that were needed for my family and my ancestors to be sealed eternally.

When I accepted the gospel and decided to be baptized, my husband thought he would like to hear the lessons too, but halfway through he decided to discontinue. I felt disappointed and was in a quandary as to whether I should join the Church without him or not. When the elders came again, I felt too ashamed of my dilemma to let them in. They pleaded with me on the doorstep to reconsider my decision.



Shelagh Pike

That night I woke up and heard a voice, quiet but penetrating, saying, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” It was the voice of the Lord. I knew what I had to do: I would serve Him no matter what. A few days later I was baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I have remained faithful to the Lord since that day, and have had the work for my ancestors, whose photos stood on my mantelpiece, done in the temple. ■



“I knew in my heart that those photographs would soon achieve significance and help me find what I was searching for.”