Talk on Tithing 29th November 1986

Grandma Elva Smith

I have been given the assignment to speak a few words to about tithing. I ask for an interest in your faith and prayers to help me say something about the truthfulness of paying tithing and to help you appreciate the blessings we enjoy when we obey this commandment. I am not an authority on this topic but I do have a testimony of tithing. It is a law given to us which we must obey.

The Primary children know what tithing is. They sing tithing songs and the verse you will hear them say is this: ‘I know what tithing is, I’ll tell you every time, ten cents from a dollar and a penny from a dime.’ Sometime the children have made envelopes or boxes that say, ‘this is my tithing, and this is for me’.

There is a story I have heard the family tell about Morgan and his brother Fred. When they were young fellows 17 or 18 years old they had earned some money one summer and prepared for a short holiday to Waterton. As they were preparing their mother advised them that they should pay their tithing before they spent it. They decided it would make them short to pay their tithing. They set off in their old car and before they were to Claresholm they had a flat tire. There wasn’t much else that could go wrong with those old cars except flat tires. It seems they didn’t carry spare tires in those days but would have to repair it on the spot. They had 3 flat tires out of the 4 wheels. This they always called their tithing lesson – maybe they would have had a better time if they had paid their tithing.

In a few short weeks we will each have the opportunity to meet with Bishop Brown for our annual tithing settlement. I know what he will ask, “Are you a full tithe payer or are you a part tithe payer?” I hope we can all answer, “Yes, I am a full tithe payer.”

This past week I have been reading stories about tithing and trying to find something new to share with you today. Our leaders have told us many stories in the past. The children have likely heard these stories before, but we can think about the message in them- it is for us also. The paying of tithing is the same as from the first, one tenth – it hasn’t changed. Sometimes the way we pay our tithing is a little different than it was when I grew up.

I remember a building we called the tithing granary. In Cardston there was a larger building that was called the tithing office where grain was stored- eggs, butter, potatoes and whatever people brought for their tithing. The 10th egg was kept separately for tithing.

President Kimball told the story when he was a young boy his mother took him and his younger brothers and sisters who were not in school to see the Bishop. They started down the road with 2 buckets of eggs. Their mother explained – the one bucket is tithing eggs- every time we take 10 eggs from the nest, one goes in this special bucket. The other nine eggs are put in this bucket we take to the store to buy what we need. Every week we took the eggs to the Bishop and he gave us a receipt to show we paid out tithing. President Kimball said it is a good practice for children to attend tithing settlement with their parents.

President Kimball also told a hay story about how he helped tramp down the hay in the hay wagon as his older brothers pitched it up. In the morning before they went to the field his father would say, “Boys this is the 10th load- it belongs to the Lord, go to the upper part where the hay is the best and get a big load and take it to the big barn where the Bishop keeps the church hay.

President Joseph F Smith, who was the son of Patriarch Hyrum Smith, tells the story of them opening their potato pit in the spring and loading the best potatoes and taking them to the tithing office. Potatoes were scarce that season. They drove up to the tithing office and one of the clerks came out and said to his widowed mother, who had a large family to feed, “It is a shame, you should not have to pay tithing.” His mother said, “Would you deny me a blessing? If I did not pay my tithing I would expect the Lord to withhold his blessings from me.” President Smith said he thought the clerk was right. Their family surely could use the potatoes and he had to work hard to plow and plant and hoe and dig then load up a load of the very best while his friends were having a good time. They were being fed from the public crib. (purse) Those boys are not known in the church today like we know Joseph F Smith. He filled a mission when he was very young and later became president of the church. After a few years President Smith decided his mother was right because that clerk left the church and led many of his family away from the church.

Another story I like is about fox tail. Fox tail is a weed that grows in the hay and isn’t very good for animals to eat. Young Karl came home feeling low and looking sad. For days he had planned on his trip to settle his tithing. He was just a young boy but he had earned enough money to pay $15.97 in tithing. When he arrived at the office it was very crowded – many people were there to pay their tithing also. There were checks and money of all kinds on the table. His contribution made hardly any showing at all. The clerk who took his money even had to ask his name. He was completely disappointed. They didn’t appreciate him at all. He told his mother no one cared if he paid his tithing, they even seemed glad when I was out of the way. The mother told her story to her boy. One day many years ago your great- great grandfather sat in his little rock house and looked out its one small window. He was very lonely because his wife had died and left him with 5 young children. He had to earn a living, do the cooking, and wash their clothes and a hundred other things every day. He finally had to give the baby girl to his sister because he could not care for her and do all the other things he had to do. He couldn’t even speak English very well. He was a Norwegian shoemaker who joined the church and was now trying to farm. It was a struggle. One winter they lived on bread and roots and once in a while a piece of mutton someone gave him. While he was thinking about his troubles a pet sheep came to the window to be petted. “Oh, he said, “you want a crust of bread.” He took down a flour sack half full of crusts that had been saved and dried. The sheep ate the bread and waited for more. Then he remembered they had been out of bread that morning but there was bread two or three days old and to think he had forgotten the sack. Now they could have bread soup for supper and the boys would love it. Then his sons came to the door and told him the team was hooked up and asked, “Where shall we get the hay for tithing.” Then Gr Gr Grandfather thought, “I must teach them a good lesson in tithing. It is more important than bread or anything right now.” He said, “We owe one big load of hay. I want you boys to go to the SW corner where the hay is finer. Be sure you get no foxtail hay. Remember no foxtail. We must give the best to the Lord.” When they drove into the tithing yard with their good hay, the first thing they noticed was that some of the hay in the pile had lots of fox tail in it. They felt proud that even though they didn’t have bread their father didn’t pick poor hay for tithing. After they unloaded another wagon moved up and covered their good hay. The man didn’t come out and tell them what a fine load of hay they brought and what fine boys they were to work so hard.

Karl listened to the story then he said, “I don’t know if $15.97 is that much after all. If I was starving I’d feel like selling the hay and buying food. The mother said whenever it seems hard to pay my tithes I always remember no foxtail and it is easy.

More than 2000 years ago an ancient Hebrew prophet speaking for the Lord said, (Mal 3:8) “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say where in have we robbed thee –in tithes and offerings.” Malachi lived 400 years before the Savior was born. He was a Hebrew prophet talking to the Jews. His teachings apply to us. He was giving us the will of God which he had been commanded to teach. To say “Will a man rob God?” is one of the most pointed questions ever asked in the scriptures.

There was an important event which took place after the resurrection of the Savior. The resurrected Lord appeared to the Nephites on this continent. He taught them the same gospel that he had given to the Jews. After the people left Jerusalem a great messenger of God came and gave them the teachings of Malachi and he even ask them to write those things down. After this had been done he explained to them all that Malachi had taught many years before. He quoted the exact words of Malachi 3. (Nephi Ch 24:8) Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me but ye say wherein have we robbed thee - In tithes and offerings. Since Jesus Christ the Savior of the world says these teachings on tithing are the doctrine and will of His Father -they apply to us.

Over 150 years ago the Lord revealed the gospel of Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith. Part of the great restoration was the restoration of the principle of tithing. In answer to Joseph Smith’s prayer, “Oh Lord show unto thy servants how much thou require of the properties of thy people for a tithing”.

In D&C 119: 3-4, a revelation to the church, the Lord said, “This commandment would be an everlasting law unto the priesthood of the Church.” It reads, “And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people and after that those who have thus been tithed shall pay one tenth.” Something happens within our soul when we overcome selfishness and give of ourselves in the spirit of love. There is happiness that comes into the heart of the tithe payer that even reflects in his face and we even look better- most of us could stand that.

There was an old Indian father who divided his flock of 100 sheep among his 10 sons. Later a rain storm came so heavily and filled a gully where 10 sheep of one of his sons were standing and they were all carried away. The next day the father visited the son who had lost all his sheep. He wished he had more sheep to give the son- perhaps he thought each of the other sons would be willing to give one of his 10 to the son who lost all his sheep. The father hurried to the home of one of his sons and said, “My son, your brother has lost all his sheep. I have come to ask you to give one sheep to him.” The son said, “I’m sorry father, I need to pay for the saddle with wool. I need the wool from all 10 sheep.” The father was sad as he went to the home of another son who replied, “I wish I could help, I told my wife we have 10 sheep she is counting on that much wool to weave a rug. I’m sure she would be angry without the wool I promised her.” The third son said, “I’m trying to build a large herd. If I return on I will have two less lambs next year.” One by one each son refused. Finally the father arrived at the home of the last son. The son and his wife brought the father food and water. The father felt there was no need to ask the son for a sheep but finally he told his son about how his other son had lost his sheep. The son’s eyes filled with tears as he listened. Then he said, “My brother shall have 5 of my sheep. Come let us go to the herd and take the 5 biggest ones to him.” The father could not believe the words he heard and he said surely to give one sheep away is enough. The son said, “The sheep were given to me and I shall give one half of them away.” Arriving at the unfortunate brother’s home they placed the 5 sheep in his corral. The two brothers shook hands with great happiness and the father wept for joy and happiness. He was joyful for the son who found happiness through giving and sadness for the 8 sons who built fences of selfishness. This story helps me to know why we should pay tithing. Heavenly Father gives us everything we have. We are blessed when we return part of what He has given us.

In closing I would like to remember some of the ways we are helped when we pay our tithing. Tithing helps to build temples. We can enjoy the blessings of a temple marriage. Paying tithing is evidence that we are worthy to receive the ordinances of the temple. Tithing helps operate missions. How much is our membership in the Lord’s kingdom worth. Nearly every member of the church can trace his membership back to the missionary effort. Tithing helps us to hear our prophet and other leaders at Conference and to hear other special meetings. The Lord requires obedience in order for us to receive his blessings.

There is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world upon which all blessings are predicated. When we receive a blessing from God it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

The Lord established the law of tithing and because it is His law it becomes our obligation to observe it if we love Him and have a desire to keep His commandments and receive his blessings.

I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.