

RELIGIOUS.

Sunday Services.

Religious services were held at the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, December 20th, 1891, commencing at 2 p. m., President Angus M. Cannon presiding.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn commencing:

How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word.

Prayer was offered by Elder George A. Woolley.

The choir sang:

He died! The Great Redeemer died,
And Israel's daughters wept around.

The Priesthood of the Twelfth Ward officiated in the administration of the Sacrament.

APOSTLE JOHN HENRY SMITH

addressed the congregation. He realized that unless we can enjoy the influence of the Holy Spirit, it would be impossible to speak for the edification of the Saints, and he, therefore, desired the congregation to give him their aid, by prayer and faith, that he might have the guidance of that Spirit during the time he might be led to occupy. On a day like the present, the speaker felt that we have full claim on our Father in heaven to give us the instruction we need, as we have exhibited our faith in coming out in such inclement weather. We have shown our good will and can claim abundant spiritual food from Him.

The speaker had no particular subject on his mind, upon which to speak, but was dependent on the promptings of the Spirit. Our Father has promised to those who rely on Him in seeking to speak to His people, that they shall be given what to say.

The speaker had recently visited some of the settlements in Arizona where he had the privilege of mingling with the Saints, enjoying their hospitality and speaking to them. The Saints in that section of country are as a rule in the enjoyment of the Spirit of God. While they have many trials and apparent sacrifices, the Lord has been good to them, and they enjoy His presence in a greater degree than many in more favored localities where the people have the privilege of frequent visits of the presiding brethren. They are reasonably prosperous temporally and desirous of living according to the requirements of the Gospel. As we mingle with the people, we see a great variety of circumstances, both in a worldly and a religious sense, and we discover that where the Saints are possessed of little worldly wealth, they seem to enjoy the companionship of the Spirit more than where they are in a position to secure to themselves good circumstances. As a rule, in poverty, the Saints are more conscientious in the observance of the requirements of our faith, in abstaining from those things which are forbidden by our Heavenly Father and in seeking that companionship which can make Saints happy. Why this should be so is hard to understand, but we can easily discover, as we mingle with the Saints, that there is a tendency among some of those who are well to do and can enjoy not only the necessities but the luxuries of life, to grow lax in the

observance of the principles of the religion which we have espoused. Many things which were regarded with abhorrence in the past are today indulged in with seemingly very little compunction of conscience. Many of the requirements of the Gospel are looked upon as of little moment. It seems to be natural to drift with the current and not to notice where we are drifting to.

The speaker referred to his experience on his first mission. When he came in contact with people in extreme poverty, his heart was readily touched and if he had anything whereby he could minister to their want, he unhesitatingly put it in their hands. He found, however, that he gradually grew more cold, as the sight of them became more familiar. This condition has, no doubt, been noticed by all who have had any experience in this direction. If we let down the bars against evil influences we will gradually become more and more familiar with the evil, and at last we will look with contempt upon things which we formerly considered sacred. Upon the Saints who are called to preach the everlasting Gospel to the world a great responsibility rests. Extreme care is therefore required.

It may be asked whether many of the things our Father has given us for our purification and enlightenment and by which the Saints were actuated in the past are not becoming obsolete, or altogether dying out. Such a practice as family prayers, for instance, seems to be unknown in many places. Many never ask a blessing on the food, unless in the presence of some visitor on whom they can lay the responsibility. By conversation with some children, it may be learned that family prayer is something unknown to them, and they will perhaps wonder why a blessing is asked on the food, only when there is a stranger present. Many people pay no attention to the Word of Wisdom. There is scarcely a table set upon which are not to be found things forbidden by the law of the Lord. Many brethren have accustomed themselves to the use of tobacco in various forms, and others use intoxicating liquors and have grown careless to other forms of transgression.

The speaker had visited the southern part of the Territory. He had found six families who did not presume to pray either morning or evening. Family devotion seemed to have been forgotten. When he had asked for the privilege of kneeling down with them and ask God to bless their homes, and had done so, the children seemed surprised. A reformation is surely necessary among the Saints. The principles of the Gospel should be explained and the people exhorted to attend to their prayers.

There is no reason, if men and women will seek to enjoy the influence of the Holy Spirit, why that influence should not be felt wherever they go, in the daily walks of life. If we live as we should, the power of God will be communicated to our surroundings. Profanity in speech is vulgarity and very debasing, yet many people are given to the vicious habit. But if the Elders will do their duty, their influence will be far good even among such men and women. Those

will soon feel that they will have to use more modesty in their language and more caution in doing that which is wrong. Reformation will come by this means, for it can be brought about only by unity of effort by those who have learned their duties and are willing to perform them.

The speaker had dwelt upon these conditions, yet, from his acquaintance with the people, he believed there were more Saints who earnestly tried to live their religion than there ever were before at any time. While many were apparently drifting away, yet there were many who were as devoted as they ever were in their lives. There is, and will be a continued growth in overcoming the evils of the world with which we are brought in contact.

The regeneration of the human family is gradual. As the seeds of truth shall find their way into the hearts of men they will bring about that great change, until the work shall be accomplished and righteousness abound among the children of men. There are now many opportunities before us. On our right hand and on the left are those who are careless, but who may be reached and eventually added to the number who are trying to do their duties. Every Christian man and woman should endeavor to bring about a change for the better in every condition of life and bring joy and happiness to families where unhappiness reigns.

Do we fully sense the condition that now exists and the responsibility that rests on us in regard to our own? In every corner, almost, temptations abound. There are abandoned women and vicious men. Temptations present themselves on all hands to the rising generation. Are we gathering those who are placed in our watchcare, striving to establish within their breasts a resting place for the Spirit of our Father in heaven? These are questions in which we should feel a deep interest. Our circumstances are greatly changed and will continue to change, possibly, for some time to come. Business chances are opened up and partnership with those not identified with our faith are entered into. But if we can build our children up firmly on the rock, the impress of their faith in God will be manifest wherever they go, and it will be the means of bringing into the fold hundreds of those who now have no regard for the Gospel. The speaker had found many opportunities of conversing with men who never before would listen to him, and expound the Gospel to them. And so have, no doubt, all of us. Are we taking advantage of such opportunities?

In the past we have been regarded as an exclusive people even by those who have lived in our own midst. We were looked upon as lacking sociability, but the time has now come when our religion is no longer treated as a football to everybody. It is not to be expected that all mankind will accept our faith, but it is to be hoped that the conditions now surrounding us will be fraught with blessings to our fellowmen as to ourselves.

The speaker expressed his joy in the opportunities that had been opened up. He did not feel dependent, but believed that a wide door had been opened before the Saints of God. Their