



“The Matchless Gift of God’s Divine Son”

Show Notes & Transcripts

Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Sunday.

Podcast Episode Descriptions:

Part 1:

Merry Christmas! Dr. Brad Wilcox discusses "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," which proclaims that Jesus is alive, resurrected, and the document was presented in the year 2000 as a sacred testimony of the literal Son of God.

Part 2:

Dr. Brad Wilcox returns for Part II. He shares being called to the Young Men’s General Presidency and his personal experience and testimony of apostles and prophets. He also affirms that the resurrected Christ is Always With Us.

Timecodes:

Part 1

- 00:01 Welcome to Part I
- 00:58 Background of Dr. Brad Wilcox
- 03:36 Dr. Brad Wilcox shares what having a birthday on December 25 is like
- 10:04 Why it is important to study “The Living Christ” at Christmas
- 12:50 This document is of infinite worth and the background to the document is discussed
- 20:08 President Nelson thinks of Joseph Smith when singing “We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet”
- 22:00 There will be more and more doctrines in which the Church will stand alone
- 24:23 Ideals are important but sometimes painful when we don’t measure up
- 25:21 Profound influence of the Savior
- 29:23 The Bible Dictionary and what it states about miracles
- 33:08 Jesus is Jehovah of the Old Testament
- 36:37 Other sheep
- 39:56 Dr. Wilcox shares story of a student coming to talk with him about beliefs
- 43:05 Jesus is divine
- 45:52 End of Part I
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Part 2:

- 00:03 Welcome to Part II
- 00:24 How we are begotten sons and daughters of God
- 02:07 What the “cornerstone” means in the document
- 07:16 The importance of apostles
- 09:32 Dr. Wilcox shares receiving a calling
- 14:46 Dr. Wilcox shares working with apostles and prophets and women authorities
- 20:06 Apostles serve until they die, willingly
- 23:58 Dr. Wilcox shares a personal story about his grandson
- 26:05 Husbands and wives serving together
- 27:18 The titles of Advocate and Emmanuel
- 28:44 The Resurrection is the greatest miracle
- 30:07 Memorize the document or the last three sentences
- 30:37 The Three Levels of Christmas
- 33:34 Jesus will return
- 35:59 What being valiant in their testimony of Christ means
- 37:25 The difference when people witness around Christmastime
- 41:00 End of Part II

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Biographical Information:



Bradley R. (Brad) Wilcox was sustained as the second counselor in the Young Men general presidency on April 4, 2020.

Bradley R. Wilcox was born in Provo, Utah, on December 25, 1959. He and his wife, Deborah Gunnell, have four children.

Bradley R. Wilcox received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Brigham Young University (BYU) and his doctorate in education from the University of Wyoming.

He has served in several Church callings, including full-time missionary in the Chile Vina del Mar Mission, bishop, mission president of the Chile Santiago East Mission, counselor in a YSA stake presidency, and member of the Sunday School general board. Most recently, he served as high councilor and stake Young Men president.

He is currently a professor in BYU's Department of Ancient Scripture. He is the author of the book *The Continuous Atonement* and the BYU devotional address "His Grace Is Sufficient."

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EPISODE 52 • PART I



Dr. Bradley R. Wilcox

Christmas

Hank Smith:	00:00	Welcome to followHIM, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their <i>Come, Follow Me</i> study. I am Hank Smith.
John Bytheway:	00:09	And I am John Bytheway.
Hank Smith:	00:10	We love to learn.
John Bytheway:	00:11	We love to laugh.
Hank Smith:	00:13	We want to learn and laugh with you.
John Bytheway:	00:15	As together, we followHIM.
Hank Smith:	00:20	Hello everyone, and merry Christmas. Welcome to followHIM. My name is Hank Smith. I am here with my jolly co-host, John Bytheway.
John Bytheway:	00:33	I love Jolly Ranchers. Thank you.
Hank Smith:	00:35	You are jolly, you are jolly. It is Christmas here at followHIM, and we want to wish everybody happy holidays, Merry Christmas to you.
Hank Smith:	00:45	I knew there was one guest that would make this Christmas followHIM episode just perfect. He was actually born on Christmas himself. Tell us John, who we have with us.
John Bytheway:	00:58	Yes. I'm so excited to have Dr. Bradley Wilcox back with us. Brother Wilcox, our friend, and I was excited to have him on Christmas.
John Bytheway:	01:07	Brad wrote a little book called <i>Because of the Messiah in a Manger</i> . And so, we thought it'd be perfect to have Brad.
John Bytheway:	01:15	Many of you have already heard of him. I'm just going to read his bio again, a short one in the back of this book.

John Bytheway:	01:21	Brad Wilcox is an Associate Professor in the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University, where he also enjoys teaching at campus Education Week, Especially for Youth.
John Bytheway:	01:30	Now they're going to call that FSJ. He speaks at Time Out for Women events, he's the author of <i>The Continuous Atonement</i> , <i>The Continuous Conversion</i> , <i>The 7-Day Christian</i> , the BYU devotional, "His Grace is Sufficient."
John Bytheway:	01:44	I have my students watch that for extra credit. In 2018, his book, <i>Changed Through His Grace</i> , received the Harvey B. Susan Easton Black Outstanding Publication award for LDS scholarship.
John Bytheway:	01:56	Our listeners know who Susan Easton Black is too. As a young man, Brad served his mission in Chile, and in 2003, returned to that country to preside over the Chile Santiago East Mission, for three years. Brad, tell us the difference between Chile and Chile. Am I saying that right?
Bro. Bradley R.....:	02:15	In Spanish they say Chile, and in English we say Chile. So it depends on whether you're speaking English or Spanish. It's a great place, though.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	02:25	I was excited when I heard that this podcast is ranked number four in the country of Chile, for Christian podcasts. That's exciting to me, because it's not even being translated into Spanish.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	02:40	So that means people are listening to it in English, and getting the Spanish transcript. But it's exciting to me to think that some of the friends that I have there; some of our dear friends in Chile, are able to listen to this podcast. So if you're there in Chile. [foreign language]
Hank Smith:	03:02	He said something beautiful there.
John Bytheway:	03:06	Thank you so much, Brad. I have no idea what you said. So Brad had served on the Sunday School General Board, and he is now the second counselor in the Young Men's General Presidency.
John Bytheway:	03:18	A lot of us who're listening will remember his talk in just the past General Conference at the time of this recording, "Worthiness Is Not Flawlessness." And just a beautiful talk. So we love you Brad, and love so much having you back.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	03:33	It's wonderful to be with you, especially at Christmas.

Hank Smith:	03:36	Now, before we get into our lesson, Brad, I have to ask about having a birthday on Christmas. Tell us about your childhood, and tell us what that was like. Did you just think that the whole world was celebrating?
John Bytheway:	03:52	For you, it's funny.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	03:53	Yeah. My mom and dad used to hang a sign in our house that said, "Happy birthday to Jesus and Brad." So I always felt like I was in good company.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	04:04	My mom is the one that said how my birth certainly changed her views of Christmas. She'd always grown up with these beautiful manger scenes and Mary and her blue robe.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	04:18	And she says, "Boy, having you on Christmas, sure, blew that image for me." She said, "I realized that Mary was certainly not there, serenely pondering. Mary was having a baby. And that, her blue robes, certainly, weren't nice and clean."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	04:40	My mom went into labor on the 24th, and then I was born on the 25th. She said, "Suddenly, the whole nativity scene took on new meaning for me, for sure."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	04:54	And she said, "One of the most startling realizations for her, was that the song is wrong." "Away in a Manger." She said, "In our hymn book, it says anonymous."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	05:06	She says, "Anonymous never had a baby." She just never liked the line that said, "The little Lord, Jesus, no crying he makes."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	05:17	She said, "Obviously Anonymous never had a baby. Because babies cry and you cried a lot." So I think it would be funny to see a nativity one day, that has baby Jesus screaming, and poor Joseph trying to clean up the stable. And Mary was exhausted after the birth.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	05:45	Maybe that's the real picture that my mom finally had in her head. And she said it changed Christmas for her, but in a positive way. Because she realized that it was real.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	05:59	It wasn't just a story. She said, "Suddenly the birth of this baby became very real to her." It's been a really nice experience to have that birthday, and just be able to have a little extra sparkle in the season, and to be able to have that connection with Mary and with Jesus. It's been a special thing through the years.

John Bytheway:	06:34	We have a daughter, Brad, you know Natalie, who was born December 27th, and her name is Natalie Noel, because she was so close to... And I think Natalie means Christmas girl, or something like that.
Bro. Bradley R....:	06:48	My brother's named Chris, and I'm named Brad. I said, "Mom, why didn't you name me, Chris? That would've been perfect for Christmas." And she said, "We figured you'd have enough trauma with your Christmas birthday. You didn't need more."
John Bytheway:	07:05	Didn't you have two trees at your house, Brad?
Bro. Bradley R....:	07:07	Oh yeah. My mom and dad would always put up one Christmas tree for Jesus, and one birthday tree for me. And so, in our house we still have those two trees.
Bro. Bradley R....:	07:18	We have one for me and one for Jesus. My brothers were supposed to put a gift for me under each tree. And then that way, my birthday wouldn't be forgotten.
Bro. Bradley R....:	07:29	It worked great until my brother, one year, bought me a pair of mittens, and he put one under the Christmas tree and one under the birthday cake.
Bro. Bradley R....:	07:42	The funny thing is that he did it again last year. He showed up at my house with a birthday present and a Christmas present. And when I unwrap them on Christmas morning, it was a pair of socks.
Hank Smith:	07:57	One in one box. It ruins, "This is a birthday surprise. You gotta know what's coming. I didn't know you had a baby born on the 27th, so do we. But I remember I was the one telling Sara on Christmas. I'm like, "Sit still, don't move."
John Bytheway:	08:12	Don't walk anywhere.
Hank Smith:	08:15	Brad wrote a book about Christmas, and so did you, John. You wrote a book called <i>Born This Happy Morning</i> . Tell me about it.
John Bytheway:	08:26	I just was inspired by that line from, <i>O Come, All Ye Faithful</i> . "Yay, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning." And I just saw many things about Christmas, the anticipation the whole world had for Jesus coming, and what that would mean.
John Bytheway:	08:43	What a happy morning, even though we've just discussed in a manger and everything else. But for that to finally happen, I think of those in the new world that had the sign of light given,

and that the light of the world was coming. And so, thanks, Hank, for throwing that out there.

Bro. Bradley R....:	09:03	I love that book. I love the way that you have reminded us of so many Christmas memories in that book.
John Bytheway:	09:11	Thank you. I'm glad you did yours.
Hank Smith:	09:13	The other other thing we ought to do, is we probably ought to say happy birthday to the prophet Joseph Smith, since it is our Doctrine and Covenants year; this year.
Hank Smith:	09:22	And Joseph Smith was born on December 23rd. I remember that as a kid and thinking, "We ought to celebrate that a little bit."
Bro. Bradley R....:	09:30	It's a wonderful connection. What a happy Christmas that must have made for the Smiths.
Hank Smith:	09:35	Let's move into our lesson. And then, if we want to keep laughing and joking, I'm sure our listeners won't mind.
Hank Smith:	09:42	I expected this as I opened up the lesson in the manual this week, to talk about Christmas. But interestingly, we really spent most of our lesson in "The Living Christ" document.
Hank Smith:	09:55	So that's where we're going to spend our time today, Brad. We'll let you take off, and John and I will just be here. It's eager students, ready to learn.
Bro. Bradley R....:	10:04	I think it's a very appropriate thing to be studying at Christmas time, because that was the realization my mom had when she had me on Christmas, "Hey, this is real. This was a real thing, this was a real birth, these were real people."
Bro. Bradley R....:	10:18	And "The Living Christ" document certainly reminds us that Jesus is real, and that He is alive. He's not a little baby in a manger, He's not hanging on a cross.
Bro. Bradley R....:	10:32	He is resurrected, He is alive, and He is leading this Church today. And that's a beautiful thing to be thinking about and studying at Christmastime.
Bro. Bradley R....:	10:45	As I started thinking about where we got "The Living Christ" document, it was actually a birthday present for Jesus.

Bro. Bradley R.....:	10:53	It was President Nelson who said that, "They put this document together in the year 2000." He said, "We did it as a birthday present for the Lord."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	11:09	And I think that's a nice connection to make as well. President Nelson first did the document in <i>The Church News</i> .
Bro. Bradley R.....:	11:25	Elder Nelson at that time, was explaining that the most sacred thing that they felt like they could contribute, was their testimony of the Living Christ, as literal son of God.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	11:39	As they were thinking about this change from the year 1999 to the year 2000. Just as the ancient apostles, including Peter, James, and John, Paul, just as they testified of Christ.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	11:56	Elder Nelson said that their words lived long after their death. And he said, "We wanted to leave something that would get into the hearts of people and endure, even beyond the life of those testifiers."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	12:13	It's interesting that, of all the apostles and prophets who signed that document, today there's only five who are still living. And so, President Nelson's words were right on target.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	12:29	This document has outlived and kept the testimony alive of so many of the brethren who signed it. But today, we still have President Nelson, President Oaks, President Eyring, Elder Ballard, who's the Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, and Elder Holland.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	12:50	And so, they are still with us. "And this document is of infinite worth," says President Nelson. He says, "This is the reason my great grandparents and yours joined the Church. This is why converts are coming into the Church now, it's not because of our programs or procedures, it's because we are rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	13:21	I wanted to find out a little bit more about President Nelson's experience, and I did. I found it out in the book <i>Insights</i> , a beautiful book by Sheri Dew, about the prophet highlighting high points in his life.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	13:38	And he lists this as a high point in his life. He says, "As the year 2000 approached, and thus the 2000th celebration of the birth of the son of God, the First Presidency in the Quorum of the Twelve discussed what, if anything, they should do to commemorate the turning of the century.

Bro. Bradley R.....:	13:58	With all the Y2K predictions of possible digital catastrophes, and associated hoopla, these prophets, seers, and revelators, felt that they, who had been called to bear witness of Jesus Christ throughout all the world, should do something different, something distinctive.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	14:18	And then, Elder Nelson, at the time, was assigned to oversee the project, which included shepherding the document through to completion.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	14:31	This is a wonderful celebration of the Savior, but it's also a tribute to our prophet who shepherded this project through. This was back in the year 2000. Now we're in 2021, and I hope he's still here 20 more years from now.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	14:51	I just love him. Now, President Ballard has also written about this experience. He wrote in the biography that just came out of his life.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	15:06	He says, "During this momentous dedication celebration, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, stood dressed in white before the statues for a historic photograph."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	15:19	Now, this is the celebration of the dedication of the Rome Temple. And he says, "Additionally, as Special Witnesses to the world of the divinity of Jesus Christ, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	15:36	He says, "Shared their testimony of the Savior by recording excerpts from the document, "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," originally released in 2000. When they had gathered in Rome for that dedication, they actually recorded parts of "The Living Christ."
Hank Smith:	16:00	You could find that video on YouTube. We'll link it in our show notes. I was just watching that just the other day. It's beautiful.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	16:08	Then President Ballard said in a talk called "Return and Receive." President Ballard said, "The Living Christ, the Testimony of the Apostles was presented to the Church on January 1st, 2000.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	16:22	"Place a copy where you can see it, and take time to review each of the statements found in this inspired testimony of Christ by His Special Witnesses, who signed it."

Bro. Bradley R....:	16:35	So he's asking us to do exactly what we're doing today. I have a copy of "The Living Christ" hanging in my study, and he's asking us to review this document. And that's what we're doing.
Bro. Bradley R....:	16:49	He says, "Prayerfully reading the Living Christ is like reading the testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the prophets of the Book of Mormon. It will increase your faith in the Savior, and help you stay focused on him as you follow your plans to reach your eternal goals." Isn't that a beautiful promise from Elder Ballard? Just beautiful.
Hank Smith:	17:15	I was thinking as I was preparing for this, that so often, documents like this become decoration. They become something we put on the wall and it represents what we believe.
Hank Smith:	17:25	But sometimes we don't read them. We just leave them there on the wall. Maybe we should take the time to read them.
Hank Smith:	17:33	Now, I want wanted to mention one thing before we go into the document. And that is, I had a little moment as I was studying this week, where I got that little feeling in my throat, as I read the names and realized how much these individual apostles had done for me.
Hank Smith:	17:52	Listen to these 10 apostles who have gone on to the spirit world, Robert D. Hales, Richard G. Scott, Joseph B. Wirthlin. I can just picture them in my mind and hear their voices.
Hank Smith:	18:09	Neal A. Maxwell, David B. Haight. You remember L. Tom Perry, Boyd K. Packer, James E. Faust, Thomas S. Monson. And the prophet of my teenage years, Gordon B. Hinckley.
Hank Smith:	18:30	I just read those 10 names as I was preparing for this, and it just caught in my throat, just how much those 10 men who have gone on, have done for me personally.
Hank Smith:	18:44	I just had a little moment where I was, "Wow!" It took my breath away there for a second to read those names again.
Bro. Bradley R....:	18:51	It's true because these men aren't just leaders of an organization. They are apostles, they're special witnesses, they're prophets. That means that they become part of my testimony.

Bro. Bradley R....:	19:08	My witness of Christ is standing on the shoulders of their witnesses of Christ. And that strengthens my own testimony, it deepens and helps give a foundation to my faith.
Bro. Bradley R....:	19:24	And so, you're right, Hank. We're not just reading the names of famous men or outstanding leaders. We're reading the names of men who have helped us draw closer to Christ.
Hank Smith:	19:39	It was almost as if I could hear their voice woven into my memory. I really just took a second, and I would encourage everybody to do that, who's listening.
Hank Smith:	19:50	Take a second, read through those names, and just try to hear their voice. Every one of those I can think of has had a serious impact on the direction of my life. Especially President Hinckley and President Monson.
Bro. Bradley R....:	20:08	Someone once asked President Nelson, "When you sing, "We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet," Who are you thinking of? Because we are all thinking of him."
Bro. Bradley R....:	20:19	But when he stands there and sings the words, who's he thinking of? Like President Hinckley and other prophets, he said, "I think of Joseph Smith."
Bro. Bradley R....:	20:32	He says, "That's the prophet I'm thinking of." So even president Nelson is saying, "My life has been influenced by the prophets who have come before me.
Bro. Bradley R....:	20:42	In a talk called Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ Into Our Lives, President Nelson says, "Joseph Smith who declared emphatically that the fundamental principles of our religion are the Testimony of the Apostles and prophets concerning Jesus Christ.
Bro. Bradley R....:	21:00	That he died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven. And all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it."
Bro. Bradley R....:	21:12	And then President Nelson says, "It was this very statement of the prophet, that provided the incentive for 15 prophets, seers, and revelators, to issue and sign their testimony to commemorate the 2000th anniversary of the Lord's birth.
Bro. Bradley R....:	21:30	That historic testimony is titled the Living Christ. As you seek to learn more about Jesus Christ, I urge you to study the Living Christ." And that's what we're going to do today.

Bro. Bradley R.....:	21:43	Let me share one last thing that I found in the footnotes of President Ballard's new biography. It's on page 384. And he says this, "Of the Living Christ and The Family: A Proclamation to the World."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	22:00	Elder Ballard said, "They are going to become progressively more and more standalone doctrines as the Church stands alone." Now think about it.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	22:15	Many of us remember when "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" was announced, and we at the time thought, "Yeah-
Hank Smith:	22:26	Nothing is too new in there.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	22:27	... this is obvious, this is clear. This is great to have it written down, but what's the big deal about it?" And yet now all these years later, we know exactly what the big deal was.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	22:42	And I think what we need to realize is that the same thing will happen with this document. As we read through this document, we are thinking, "What's the big deal? This is what we believe about Christ."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	22:56	And we have to realize that we are living just 20 years after this document was signed and put out. We are living in what people are calling a post-Christian in world.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	23:12	Elder Andersen spoke in [General] Conference a while ago and said, "In the next 10 years, there will be more people leaving Christianity than entering Christianity."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	23:24	And so, I think the same way that the Family Proclamation, we can see that it was very prophetic. It was very needed.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	23:34	And in the same way, if we don't see it yet, we will soon see how vital it is for us to be able to refer back to this document and say, "No, this is not a post-Christian world.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	23:50	This is a world where Christ still is our focus and still is the object of our worship, and He is still our exemplar, and He is still our mentor, and He lives today, and He's leading us today." So interesting background on the document, isn't it?
Hank Smith:	24:12	Yeah. I think that is wonderful. One connection I made last week, John, you'll remember. We had Dr. Jenet Erickson here, and she made a wonderful connection between these two documents.

Hank Smith:	24:23	She said, "The Family Proclamation is an ideal. We hold it up, we want it. But it can be painful when we don't reach that ideal.
Hank Smith:	24:30	And here, when we have the pain of not reaching the ideal of the Family Proclamation like we'd want here, where do we turn when we have pain from that. And that is to "The Living Christ."
Hank Smith:	24:43	So she just said, "Hey, these two documents can work together to give us an ideal to reach toward and our way through any difficulty of not reaching that ideal for one reason or another."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	24:57	Oh yeah. What a beautiful insight.
John Bytheway:	25:00	I think it was Jenet that mentioned Elder Christofferson saying, "It's not the plan of perfection. It's the Plan of Redemption.
John Bytheway:	25:10	We have a Redeemer, we need a Redeemer. And "The Living Christ is the testimony of that Redeemer that offers redemption from our imperfection." Which ... I love that.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	25:21	In the first paragraph of the document it says, "None other has had so profound and influence upon all who have lived, and will yet live upon the Earth."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	25:34	I love that statement. Because just as the Family Proclamation came, as the family was under attack. Now, here we're looking at "The Living Christ" document, and realizing that in many parts of the world, Christ is coming under attack.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	25:55	That people are saying, "We don't need to believe in Him. How does a guy's death on a cross have any purpose for me? How does that make any difference for me?"
Bro. Bradley R.....:	26:10	And without this understanding, they're so quick to dismiss Christ. And yet, I love this statement because he has had a profound influence on them, even if they don't want to recognize it.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	26:26	You think of the Christian tradition, you think of the education that Christianity kept alive during the Dark Ages, you think of the progress in so much of the world can all trace its roots to the growth of Christianity.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	26:45	People are so quick to point out, "All these wars have been fought in the name of religion." And yet look at how much good has been done in the name of religion, especially as we look at Christianity.

Bro. Bradley R....:	26:59	So the influence that Christ has had is so strong even in the lives of those who don't recognize it. They don't even realize that the freedom they have is because of those who believed in Christ. It's because of Christ that they enjoy some of the personal liberties that they take for granted.
John Bytheway:	27:25	Brad, I'm glad you said that. That comes up in classes, "Christianity has caused wars." People are saying. I always love to say, "That's what man did to Christianity, not what Christianity did to man." And misunderstanding of things.
John Bytheway:	27:40	Even the Twelve were told, "People will want to kill you and think they're doing God a favor. Because of misunderstandings about God."
John Bytheway:	27:50	I remember, long time ago, I heard an evangelist on television, and I went and bought this book, <i>What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?</i> Let's see Dr. James Kennedy.
John Bytheway:	28:03	I remember this whole book is about all of the things you were mentioning, Brad. Education, hospitals. I had no idea, all of the things that were fruits of Christianity throughout history, that it was really eye opening to see what a blessing the Savior has been, even in ways that people might not connect today.
Bro. Bradley R....:	28:27	Look at how many people at Christmastime, even those who now say, "I don't believe in Christ." And yet their Christmas celebrations are such a joyous time of year for them, and they love Christmas movies.
Bro. Bradley R....:	28:45	They watch all the movies on TV, and they cry, and they love the Christmas music. Even though many of them celebrate Christmas in a way that's detached from Christ.
Bro. Bradley R....:	28:57	Just look at the peace that comes during this time of year, the joy that it brings to so many, and realize that that is because of Jesus Christ. So the influence is there, even if they choose to close their eyes to it.
John Bytheway:	29:16	Hank, why don't you share your insight from the Bible Dictionary about miracles?
Hank Smith:	29:23	John, I can't believe you thought of that, because I was thinking that, "I'm grateful that we're good enough friends that you read my mind at this point." Because that's exactly what I thought of.

Hank Smith:	29:32	If you read under miracles, the little heading in the Bible dictionary, it says, "They are the natural results of the Messiah's presence." Not presents but "presence."
Hank Smith:	29:46	If you have Jesus around, what naturally happens? Miracles naturally happen. And I've shown my students, all of a sudden at Christmastime, what happens?
Hank Smith:	29:54	People's hearts get softened. People start giving more, they start just being kinder, they reach out to, maybe to friends and loved ones they haven't reached out to all year. Why?
Hank Smith:	30:07	Because we have Jesus' name up everywhere. We have statues of him around. And all of a sudden people get nicer. It's the natural result of having the Messiah just around us more.
Hank Smith:	30:19	And what happens on December 26? We take it all down and everybody goes back to being crouchy. That's the natural result of not having the Messiah around so much, as we just fall into this natural man-, natural woman-type slump.
Bro. Bradley R....:	30:36	The document says, "He went about doing good. He entreated all to follow His example." And at Christmastime, even those who may not know much about His example, they do follow that tendency to just be a little brighter, share a little easier, give a little more selflessly.
Bro. Bradley R....:	31:02	And we see that, not only at Christmastime, but for members of the Church, we see it all year round. It's been fascinating during COVID, to watch what's happened.
Bro. Bradley R....:	31:14	Because not only have the Church donations to fast offerings and humanitarian aid, reached record numbers, but the Church expenditures for fast offerings and humanitarian aid, have reached record numbers.
Bro. Bradley R....:	31:34	To the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been given, not just to members of the Church, but to people all around the world who are in need, and who are suffering.
Bro. Bradley R....:	31:48	I just love that at this time when it was hard, and in this time when so many were struggling during this COVID pandemic, hearts were turned outward as we followed the example of the savior, and as we reached out to help others who were in need.
Bro. Bradley R....:	32:12	Just during 2020 itself, think of all the service projects that have been done clear across the world. Because people have

followed the example of the Savior, and they have gone about doing good.

Hank Smith:	32:29	I love that the Christianity has done... What does it say again? "None other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the Earth."
Hank Smith:	32:42	There's just nobody like it. Even when we say the date. Even when someone says, "What year is it? 2021. Since when? 2021 years, since what?" Since Jesus was born.
John Bytheway:	32:55	Since Jesus.
Bro. Bradley R....:	32:57	Even though people try to say before Common Era and after Common Era, most kids have to have that explained to them. What's the Common Era? It's Jesus Christ.
Bro. Bradley R....:	33:08	And so, even when people try to hide his influence, his influence is there. I love the document, "Testifying boldly, that He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament."
Bro. Bradley R....:	33:21	On our mission, we had a woman who was a Jehovah's Witness who ended up joining the Church, and I was invited to attend the baptism.
Bro. Bradley R....:	33:31	So there were the missionaries and there she was getting baptized. And after her baptism, they asked her to share her testimony. There she was, her hair was wet, having just been in the font.
Bro. Bradley R....:	33:42	She had just changed. And she was very emotional. As she stood in front of the small group that had gathered, and said, "Now, I am truly a Jehovah's Witness."
Bro. Bradley R....:	33:53	And the missionaries freaked out. They were like, "No, no. You just joined The Church of Jesus Christ." But those who had ears to hear, understood exactly what she was saying.
Bro. Bradley R....:	34:06	Now I am truly a witness. She had just covenanted in the waters of baptism. She had just covenanted to stand as a witness of God at all times in all places, and to be a witness for Jesus Christ. And now she understood that Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.
Hank Smith:	34:29	That's beautiful. That's wonderful. "Now, I am a Jehovah's Witness."

Bro. Bradley R.....:	34:36	I know the missionaries were very confused. They're like, "No, no. We've been over this."
Hank Smith:	34:41	I promise. I promise President, we've taught her.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	34:46	Another statement I love is, "He was the firstborn of the Father, and Only Begotten in the flesh." That's a statement that confuses a lot of Christians. And yet those statements are right out of scripture.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	35:01	And yet for many Christians, they can't understand how He can be the firstborn of the Father, which then says, "There's going to be a second or a third or a fourth born."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	35:13	And then, He's the Only Begotten in the flesh. And they don't quite understand how those two terms can coexist. And yet we understand because of our understanding of the premortal world.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	35:27	We understand that He was the first born spirit child of God. And then, He's the Only Begotten in the flesh. John, you shared with me a powerful insight the other day, about why we use the King James Bible, when we are talking about John 3:16.
John Bytheway:	35:47	John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
John Bytheway:	35:55	That John 3:16 verse, Elder Christofferson called it the plan of salvation, in one verse. The phrase, "The only begotten Son." If you find translations after King James, they don't like that word, "begotten."
John Bytheway:	36:11	The idea that God begats, they took that out. And so, you'll find in translations after the King James, it will say, "The one and only son." Or something like that. They took out the begotten part. Interesting you remember that, Brad.
Bro. Bradley R.....:	36:26	And yet right here in the document, these brethren did not shy away from that word at all. They said, "He is the Only Begotten son in the flesh."
Bro. Bradley R.....:	36:37	I also love the next paragraph, "As the risen Lord, He visited among those He had loved in life. He also ministered among his other sheep in ancient America."

Bro. Bradley R....:	36:48	Sometimes in my classes I'll say, "Since when did Jesus give a commandment, that He was not willing to live?" And when He said, "Go ye into all the world." Was He telling His apostles to do something that He didn't do?
Bro. Bradley R....:	37:06	He told them to get baptized, and He got baptized. So He's telling them to go into all the world. And then, He Himself, is also going to go into all the world.
Bro. Bradley R....:	37:18	And we have remarkable evidence of that in the Book of Mormon, where it says, "Not only did He visit the ancient Americas, but He also visited other parts of the world. And his sheep in many places in the world."
John Bytheway:	37:34	I read an article in <i>Meridian Magazine</i> , in Russia, there was a record album cover that a famous painter had made of Jesus with an ancient Russian Orthodox priest or something.
John Bytheway:	37:50	This member of the Church saw this album cover and said, "What is this?" And this Russian Orthodox priest, "There's this legend, that Jesus came here after He was resurrected."
John Bytheway:	38:05	It was pretty fun because in my class, everybody's got laptops. Now he just produced the picture right now and held it up for everybody.
John Bytheway:	38:12	The member of the Church said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. So you're saying that you have a legend that Jesus came after His resurrection to this part of the world. Do you think that's plausible?"
John Bytheway:	38:23	And this priest said, "You're talking about the Book of Mormon, aren't you?" You'd probably find that article, but that's not the only place.
John Bytheway:	38:35	I've heard that there are other legends about Jesus going there. I love that idea, Brad. That he told them to go into all the world, and He Himself went into all the world.
John Bytheway:	38:44	And He told them He was going to do it. There are other sheep I have, it's not you, it's not those in Jerusalem. I'm going to go see them. And He didn't say if that was in one or in many places. So I think it was probably in many places.
Bro. Bradley R....:	38:55	You should hear the missionaries in the London, England Mission, belt out the song they sing as their mission song. It's a song about Jesus coming to England.

Bro. Bradley R....:	39:08	It wasn't written by a member of the Church. It's an ancient hymn. But it also harks back to a legend that Christ came to England.
Bro. Bradley R....:	39:17	And so, you start seeing these touches of that truth, that He visited other sheep. And you start seeing touches of that clear around the world.
Bro. Bradley R....:	39:30	I love the phrase here in the document that says, "He and His Father appeared to the boy, Joseph Smith." Just as we said that Jesus has had this incredible influence in the world, we have to acknowledge the incredible influence that Joseph Smith has had in our understanding of Jesus.
Bro. Bradley R....:	39:56	Some kid came to me the other day and said, "Brother Wilcox, I don't believe in Joseph Smith anymore, but I still believe in God and Jesus."
Bro. Bradley R....:	40:04	And I said, "Look, I don't want to be rude, but do you realize how silly that just sounded?" And he's like, "What?" And I said, "You just separated God and Jesus. You just made them two different individuals-
John Bytheway:	40:21	Where'd you get that?
Bro. Bradley R....:	40:21	Where did you learn to do that? Who taught you that? It was Joseph Smith who taught you that they are two individuals. And so, don't tell me you don't believe in Joseph Smith anymore, when your whole understanding of God and Christ can be traced back to the teachings and testimony of Joseph Smith."
Hank Smith:	40:48	Someone might say, "I don't believe in the prophet Joseph Smith anymore." I'm like, "You don't want to be married in the next life?"
John Bytheway:	40:53	Yeah.
Hank Smith:	40:53	Of course, I'm going to be married in the next life.
John Bytheway:	40:57	Where'd you get that doctrine?
Hank Smith:	40:58	And he's not a prophet. So much.
John Bytheway:	41:02	So many things like that. I think, was it Gerrit Dirkmaat, that just made a list, just off the cuff of things that, if you leave, you're leaving this.

John Bytheway:	41:13	I don't like the way that we haven't talked about Mother in Heaven. You leave the Church, there is no Mother in Heaven.
John Bytheway:	41:20	This marriage in the next life is confusing about, there's no marriage in the next life-
Hank Smith:	41:25	You don't have to worry about it.
John Bytheway:	41:26	He just went off all these things that are part of the Restoration. Thanks for saying that, Brad.
Bro. Bradley R....:	41:33	Even the document quotes Joseph Smith and says, "This is the testimony, last of all, which we give of Him. That He lives, for we saw Him."
Bro. Bradley R....:	41:46	As people are struggling to stay in Christianity, and they feel like they don't have a witness that they can look to, to be evidence for their faith. They need to realize that Joseph Smith is that witness.
Bro. Bradley R....:	42:08	He saw Him. Why do we believe that Jesus is real? Why don't we just cave and say, "He's just a fable, He's just a myth?"
Bro. Bradley R....:	42:22	It's just something that people made up all those years ago. Why don't we fold? Why don't we cave? When people say there's nothing true in the Bible, it's just like a folk tale that's been passed down.
Bro. Bradley R....:	42:37	It's oral stories that were finally written down. People are so quick to dismiss all of that. And as Latter-day Saints, we're not.
Bro. Bradley R....:	42:47	We're not quick to dismiss that, because we have a witness who is a modern witness. Not just Joseph Smith, but even the witnesses who signed this document, who have a special witness of Jesus Christ. That strengthens our testimonies.
John Bytheway:	43:05	Brad, one of the things I wanted to add today, it was a revelation to me, I didn't realize it. In my master's program, that just as there is a continuum of liberal and conservative in politics, there's a liberal conservative continuum in Christianity.
John Bytheway:	43:25	One famous example is the Jesus Seminar. I want to say the eighties, to sound familiar. They got together and voted on what they really thought was in the Bible.

John Bytheway:	43:35	Now this is what Dr. Robert Millet taught me: there are people who are Bible scholars who are not Bible believers. But they went through the gospels and decided what to throw out.
John Bytheway:	43:46	They threw out all of the miracles, the Resurrection, most of the book of John, I think, is what they said. I didn't know that. President Benson talked about the Book of Mormon, testifying of the divinity of Christ.
John Bytheway:	44:06	That He's not just a great moral teacher, but He was divine, He was resurrected; the greatest miracle of all. And this document testifies of that.
John Bytheway:	44:16	The Book of Mormon also goes back to, "No, no, no. He really was the Son of God. He really was divine. The miracles, the healing, were all testified that those were real as well."
John Bytheway:	44:30	We would be on the more conservative side in that continuum of Christianity, that would say, "No. Not only was there a Jesus of Nazareth, but He was Jesus Christ, He was the Son of God, He was divine. This document testifies of it, and so does the Book of Mormon."
Hank Smith:	44:46	Brad, when you mention the idea of, "Why don't we just say, Jesus is a myth like so many others?" There's this man from history who people say is pretty smart, his name is Albert Einstein. I don't know if either of you have heard of him.
Hank Smith:	45:00	But he said, "As a child, I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene."
Hank Smith:	45:12	This is Albert Einstein. "No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus, His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life."
John Bytheway:	45:25	Wow! That's awesome.
Hank Smith:	45:28	So why don't we jump in to say, "All the smart people are jumping in on this, Brad. Why don't we jump in?" Albert Einstein's pretty smart, and he's...
Bro. Bradley R....:	45:37	Even coming from a Jewish background, he still recognizes the vitality of the witnesses of Christ and of His life.
John Bytheway:	45:52	Please join us for Part II of this podcast.

EPISODE 52 • PART II



Dr. Bradley R. Wilcox

Christmas



- John Bytheway: 00:00 Welcome to Part II of this week's podcast.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 00:07 So how is it that we, through Christ, are begotten sons and daughters of God? How do we become the children of God through Christ when we're already children of God? Do you see the confusion that that can create?
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 00:24 But I love to say, let's replace the word here, "begotten sons and daughters of God," to, "sealed sons and daughters to God." Yes, we are begotten. Our spirits were beloved and begotten by Heavenly Parents, and yet we still need to be sealed to them. We have to choose to stay sealed to them.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 00:54 Think about a family, a mom and a dad on earth who are married in the temple. Then their children are born in the covenant. Well, God and Heavenly Mother had spirit children who were born in the covenant, but those children still have a choice that doesn't force them to be sealed to their parents. They have to make the choice to accept Jesus Christ, accept His Atonement. As they accept Christ, they're choosing to remain sealed to their parents.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 01:32 In the same way, as we accept Jesus Christ, we're making the choice to be sealed to him, to be sealed to God, to be sealed to our Heavenly Parents. We're making that choice. So if the word begotten confuses you here, maybe think sealed, that it's through him, through Christ, that the inhabitants of the world are sealed or can be sealed in God's eternal family.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 02:07 Another thing that's a little confusing is in the next paragraph, it says, "Built upon the foundation of ... apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." That can be confusing for people because lots of people have different bases for their faith. Catholics believe that the rock is Peter. Protestants believe that the rock on which the foundation of the church is is the scriptures, the word of God. This foundation of apostles and prophets is something that's very meaningful to us, but to others, they don't always see that as the foundation.

- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 02:56 Listen to something that my brother has been thinking about and has written as he looks at the footnotes and the scriptures around Matthew 16, those famous verses where we read that, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 03:29 Then it says, "Many Catholics believe Christ was saying he would build his church upon Peter from whom they claim their authority. Many Protestants believe the rock of which Christ spoke is the word of God found in the Bible from which they claim their authority. Latter-day Saints look at the verses differently."
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 03:51 In the footnote, we read that in the original Greek, Peter's name is *Petros*, which means small rock. While the rock upon which Christ would build is *petra*, meaning bedrock. Peter, the little rock, would not be the foundation himself, but would stand with other apostles and prophets, and with Christ, the chief cornerstone, to become the bedrock foundation of the church. They would have the authority and keys to lead the church through revelation, the same revelation Peter received when he declared Jesus to be the Christ. "Flesh and blood," said Jesus, "hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 04:48 So it's interesting that this document so clearly states that the foundation is the apostles and prophets, with Christ as a corner stone, so that they can receive revelation and that they can lead the Church today. Christ can lead the Church today through revelation to his prophets and to his apostles. I love understanding that.
- John Bytheway: 05:18 Could I share something about that story that maybe your distant relative S. Michael Wilcox shared at a CES Symposium once. He took a way to apply that Matthew 16 story, "Whom do men say that I am," and then, "But who do you say that I am?" Then Peter "Blessed art thou because God told you that." Brother S. Michael Wilcox made a wonderful way to apply this. What have you heard, but what do you think and what has God told you?
- John Bytheway: 05:52 My brother-in-law Jeff teaches seminary in Herriman, and he said all the time, "I begin class by, 'All right. What have you heard?'" "Yup, I've heard that. I've heard that. I've heard that," and then, "Okay. But what do you think? What have you studied? What have you prayed about? What did you do with that? Did you research it? Did you open the scriptures? Did you

go to the churchofjesuschrist.org? Then what has God told you?" Wonderful way to apply that.

- John Bytheway: 06:18 I think it's fascinating that Jesus, it sounds like He would care about popular opinion. "Whom do men say that I am?" I think He wanted to know where they were at and probably wants to know ... Yeah, wants to know where we are at. "What have you heard, but what do you think?"
- John Bytheway: 06:34 That's when Peter has that great moment. "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." "Where did you get that, Peter?" I told my classes just a couple of days ago, before this recording, "If you believe in Jesus Christ, where did you get that?" You're prophets and prophetesses," small letter P. What is it saying in the Book of Revelation, Hank? The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
- John Bytheway: 07:01 When we read the Isaiah chapters, Nephi says, "Well, they're playing unto those that have the spirit of prophecy." It sounds like it's easy for you, Nephi. But, no, all of us, if we have a testimony of Christ, have the spirit of prophecy. Like Peter, that's where we got that.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 07:16 Beautiful. Well, in the final paragraph of the document, there are some powerful, personal words. "We bear testimony as his duly ordained Apostles." It is such a blessing for us to have living apostles. So many people believe in Jesus because of Peter, James, John, and we do too, but we also have Russell, Dallin, and Henry.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 07:50 We have living apostles, living prophets on which we can rest our testimonies and with whom we can bear our personal witness, as you said, John, our testimonies of Christ that have come to us through revelation. But we don't stand alone in that. We stand together with them. Our testimonies can rest on their testimonies. When we bear the testimony revelation has given to us, we're not standing alone because we are standing together with them.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 08:29 2020 was a crazy year for all of us, but it will be a memorable year for me the rest of my life, because I was called to the Young Men Presidency during that year. I'll never forget the day, it was March 12th, that the world shut down. Hank and John, maybe you remember BYU was saying, "Hey, we're going to close down. Come to campus." Hank, you might have been in that same faculty meeting with me where they said, "You're going to learn how to use something called Zoom. Have you ever heard of Zoom?"

Hank Smith:	09:05	Yeah. I remember going, "Oh no."
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	09:07	Yeah.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	09:09	I thought, "Zoom? What are they talking about?" Well, I was hurrying to campus to go to this meeting to figure out how we were going to finish the semester now that everything was being locked down, and my phone was just ringing over and over, people canceling firesides, people canceling tours and trips, and people canceling everything.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	09:32	Then there was another phone call and I answered it. It was Elder Cook's secretary saying that Elder Cook would like to meet with my wife and me the next Sunday, on the 15th. Then my head went into a complete tailspin.
Hank Smith:	09:47	Oh man.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	09:47	Not only was the whole world closing down, but suddenly I was wondering what Elder Cook was needing to talk to me about.
Hank Smith:	09:55	Right.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	09:55	So, Hank, I might have been in that meeting, but I sure wasn't thinking about Zoom. I'll tell you that much. The next Sunday, we drove up to Salt Lake. It was so crazy. Do you remember? I mean we were like the only people on the freeway. Do you remember that? It's like everything shut down. Nobody was moving. There we were driving up to Salt Lake and it felt like a scene out of an end of the world movie or something.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	10:23	We got there. My wife had said ... When I told her about the phone call, she said, "Brad, they're going to call you to the Young Men General Presidency." I said, "No." I said, "Honey, I think a call like that would probably come from the First Presidency." She said, "I think they're a little busy right now."
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	10:45	Sure enough they were busy trying to figure out how to deal with all these new changes. But Elder Cook was asked to call me and the other counselor, Ahmad Corbitt. So we met with him that day and were called into the presidency with Brother Steve Lund. Then they told us, "You can't tell anybody."
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	11:09	Well, that's pretty common, don't share this news. But they said, "Not even with your family, because we don't know what's going to happen. In Conference, we don't know what's going to

happen. So just don't share this." So Debbie and I were very careful to not even share this with our children.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 11:26

Then they would call and say, "Okay, you need to be in Conference, but it's not going to have an audience. But you need to be there because you're being sustained." Then he said, "You can bring your family." Then they called and said, "No, you can't bring your family. Just come with you and your wife." Then they called and said, "You can't bring your wife, just you." Then they called and said, "You can't come. We're not going to have an audience at all. We're just going to broadcast Conference."

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 11:54

So there I was during General Conference, and on the Saturday, when they were announcing those who were being sustained, I was just there in the house.

Hank Smith: 12:04

Just in the house.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 12:05

My daughter and her husband had come over and we'd had scones. It's a Conference tradition. And so, then in the afternoon session, President Oaks started reading the names for sustaining. I said, "Oh, shh, shh. I want to listen to this." My daughter goes, "Dad, it's only the sustainings."

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 12:27

I said, "Yeah, but I want to listen to this."

Hank Smith: 12:29

"I want to hear this one."

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 12:30

So I'm listening to all the people who were being sustained to different callings. When we finally got to the end and they were announcing the new Young Men presidency, they announced Steve Lund's name, and my daughter said, "Oh, dad, I know him. I met him. I did an interview with him when I was in one of my classes at BYU. He is so great." And she totally missed my name. She totally missed it.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 12:59

Her husband leans over and touches her and says, "I think they just called your dad to something." She said, "No. What would they call my dad to? I mean he's just sitting here eating scones." Then she looked at me, she said, "Did they just call you to something?" I said, "Yeah, they just called me to something."

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 13:21

And so, then we have a picture of us hugging in front of the TV as the following speaker was speaking. But then the whole thing started again. They said, "Okay, we're going to set you apart on Wednesday. You can bring your families." Then they called and said, "No, don't bring your families. Just you and your wives."

- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 13:41 Even when we met Elder Cook in the lobby of the Church Administration Building, even then he said, "I have no idea what's going to happen. This is all new." He says, "Maybe they'll separate into different rooms and set you apart separately." He says, "I just don't know."
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 14:01 Finally, the door to the conference room that's just east of President Nelson's office opened and we were invited in. There was the whole First Presidency. President Nelson said, "I think we're a small enough group that we can stay together and not be breaking any rules." Then he said, "I wish we could hug you. I wish we could shake your hands. I wish we could greet you. But since we can't, feel my love," and I felt it. I felt it. We all did.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 14:46 Do you remember that General Conference when President Nelson gave us an Apostolic Blessing? When we stood in our living rooms all around the world and we did the Hosanna Shout, and President Nelson read the new document on the Restoration? I mean do you remember? We all felt that love. It came right through the TV and it reached all of us.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 15:14 But there I was standing in the same room as the First Presidency, and my wife and I felt it. President Nelson set Steven Lund apart and he did something I'd never seen before. He said, "Let's have another chair brought forward." Then he said to our wives, "We don't set you apart in this calling, but we know how important you are to the success of this work. So please come sit by your husband as we set your husband apart."
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 15:52 And so, Kalleen Lund sat right there by Steve as President Nelson set him apart. Then Ahmad Corbitt was set apart and his wife Jane sat next to him. But Ahmad Saleem Corbitt has a name that's a little tricky to pronounce. He has come from a Muslim background and he has an Islamic name.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 16:15 And so, the secretary had written the pronunciation of the name out on a card. But as the brethren stood there around Ahmad, Elder Oaks, who was setting him apart, couldn't see the pronunciation card. President Nelson picked up the card and he held it in between his fingers, just like this. As he had his hands on his head, he held this card so that his counselor could read the name and pronounce it correctly.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 16:48 He didn't think twice about it. He was just in such meekness just helping his counselor out. Then Elder Eyring, President Eyring, set me apart. I got to hold Debbie's hand the whole time that he set me apart. Then I stood up and I turned around and there was the whole First Presidency right there. I wanted so badly to

just hug them, but I couldn't. And so, I just said, "General Conference was awesome," and they laughed.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 17:32

I will never forget the incredible feeling of having those holy hands placed on my head and to be there in the presence of prophets, seers, and revelators. Over the last year and a half, as I have been able to work more closely with the brothers and the sisters who lead this Church, my testimony has been so strengthened as I see their goodness.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 18:12

They're not one way on a camera and one way when the camera's off. We live in a world where so many people have double standards, that we just expect our politicians to act one way when they're in front of a crowd and another way when they're in the privacy of their own homes, or we expect movie stars and sports stars to have two standards. One when they're on camera and another when they're in their hotel rooms. And yet I can testify that these men don't have a double standard. The Elder Christofferson you see at a pulpit is the same Elder Christofferson that I see in meetings and in a hallway.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 19:00

The goodness of these men and these women just radiates. It is the same goodness in private as it is in public. Their love of the Savior is sincere and it is secure. They know the Lord. They know his voice. They know revelation.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 19:29

I've been able to have over the past year and a half a front-row seat to watch this process, and it really is something remarkable. Elder Holland once said at a stake conference, "I wouldn't devote my life to a fairytale." He testified of the reality of Jesus who is leading his Church today. These brethren, they give their whole lives.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 20:08

Hank, you and I were just in a meeting with Elder Andersen, in which he said, "I've been lobbying to try to get an Apostle Emeritus position ...

Hank Smith: 20:19

Yeah. He was so funny.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 20:21

... in the Church," because he said, "The only way out of my calling is death."

Hank Smith: 20:28

"One exit," he said. "I have one exit."

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 20:30

He says there's just one exit. You think of the schedule they keep at their ages and you think of the responsibilities that are

theirs, the expectations that people constantly have for them to be 100% there.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 20:58

I mean the rest of us get a little day off here and there. The rest of us can have a bad day now and then. But there's this constant expectation that they will be witnesses. They step up to that and they wouldn't if they didn't know that what they're doing is the right thing, the true thing, the good thing. I have been so privileged to be able to watch these brethren and to be able to see them up close as they literally give their lives to this work and to this cause.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 21:57

It's not fun. It's not always fun for them. Somebody said, "Oh, that would be fun. You could travel all over the world." Give me a break. The amount of traveling these brethren do, the time zones they wake up in and go to sleep in, I mean I can't even imagine what they go through. People say, "Oh, it would be so fun to have everybody come up and say hi to you." Yeah, just like all the people who attack them mercilessly on social media and the internet. Oh yeah, that would be fun.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 22:32

We just have to realize that these brethren wouldn't sacrifice if they didn't know exactly what they were sacrificing for and didn't know that it's worth it. We could say those words about Peter, James, and John. We could say them about Paul and we can say them about our apostle, these duly ordained apostles today.

Hank Smith: 22:56

The Doctrine and Covenants says we should waste and wear out our lives. I remember first seeing President Monson speak. He's there standing up and he is wiggling his ears. Then his last talk where he can barely hold himself up. Same with Joseph B. Wirthlin, who we mentioned earlier. He can barely stand up there. Remember David B. Haight, how he's just shuffling up to the front. They literally waste and wear out their lives in the cause of the Living Christ.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 23:29

It's a beautiful sacrifice that they make, it's a beautiful example for us, but it's also a source of joy. These are not sad, unhappy men. They are full of joy and full of humor and full of light and full of life. It's just so wonderful to be able to see them.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 23:58

I have an autistic grandson, and he has memorized the names of the Brethren and their pictures, but it's very frustrating for him when one passes away, because then he can't understand why that one's not there anymore. And so, his parents have up on the wall of the bedroom the living apostles and then they have the dead apostles that he knows in another panel over here.

Hank Smith:	24:27	Great!
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	24:27	So that way he still sees all these faces that he's familiar with. Well, when he met Elder Andersen in the parking lot of the Church Office Building, I said, "Roman, do you know who this is?" I'm thinking, well, I'll show off here because I know he knows who this is. He said, "You're Neil L. Andersen, but you're dead."
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	24:55	Poor Elder Andersen didn't quite know how to respond to that one, because he didn't know about our two charts up there. I don't know why Roman got confused and thought he was in the dead category and not the living category. But he said, "Yeah, you're Neil L. Andersen, but you're dead."
Hank Smith:	25:20	Brad, did you notice in our meeting with Elder Andersen how he and his wife were just ... They looked so happy together. Here's a couple that is giving their life to the Church and to the Lord. Did you see them just standing side-by-side there? He had his arm around her and she was speaking to us.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	25:41	And leaning on him.
Hank Smith:	25:42	You're right.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	25:43	Leaning on him. He was leaning on that table and she was standing next to him and just leaning back into his arm that was around her waist. It was beautiful to see these couples working together because the sacrifices that these brethren are making are matched by the sacrifices that their wives are making.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	26:05	I love that these sisters are now sitting on the stand in General Conference as their husbands come and walk in and out with them and help them find their seats. I love that because you look at what Wendy W. Nelson has done to help and support our prophet and to be literally at his side through so many of his travels and teaching with him and testifying with him. I just am so in awe of these sisters.
John Bytheway:	26:44	It's interesting, in such an important and concise document, what scriptures would they decide to share? My favorite of the many names that Jesus has is Advocate. I love this because we got to talk about it earlier in the year, when Jesus appeared in the Kirtland Temple and Oliver Cowdery was there with Joseph Smith. "I am the first and the last. I am he who liveth." This document is called "The Living Christ." "I am he who was slain. I am your Advocate with the Father."

John Bytheway:	27:18	I've just always loved that nickname. We talked about it when we did Section 45 in 1 John. "If any man sin," we could add if any woman sin, if any teenager sin, "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."
John Bytheway:	27:34	The idea of an advocate is like an attorney for the defense, someone that comes to your side. I just love that they would put that one in there. "I am your advocate."
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	27:45	They don't know it, but they also included my favorite title of Christ, Emmanuel, God with us.
John Bytheway:	27:54	God with us.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	27:54	Right in the very final paragraph, they have Emmanuel. So my favorite title for Christ is also included in the document, and that's meaningful to me.
John Bytheway:	28:04	And here is this third paragraph, "He instituted the sacrament." I remember reading something of Elder Bruce C. Hafen, where he talked about looking at those words with them, this promise that he will always be with us in the sacrament of prayer. Our Advocate, our Companion, Always With Us.
Hank Smith:	28:23	I really like the fourth and the fifth paragraph where they said, "His life didn't begin in Bethlehem and it didn't conclude on Calvary." He is so much bigger than that. He rose from the grave and they have a title for him, "Risen Lord," there in that paragraph.
Hank Smith:	28:44	In the Bible Dictionary, it says that, "Christianity is founded on the greatest of his miracles and it is his resurrection." I've told my students believing in the resurrection of Jesus is a ... That is a game-changer in life. This is not a little thing to believe. This man who was dead is now alive. That changes everything. That changes everything about your life and mine to believe that he was dead, truly dead, heart dead, brain dead, and then he came back. He is up and moving and going and he is alive. That changes everything.
Hank Smith:	29:24	People had done miracles before. People had taught doctrine before that he taught. It was that Atonement and Resurrection which makes Him the greatest figure of all time.
Hank Smith:	29:37	This is from President Howard W. Hunter about the Resurrection. He says, "Without the Resurrection, the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes a litany of wise sayings and seemingly

unexplainable miracles. But sayings and miracles with no ultimate triumph. No, the ultimate triumph is the ultimate miracle. For the first time in the history of mankind, one who was dead raised himself into living immortality."

Hank Smith: 30:07 I've heard people memorize this document. I think it's an incredible goal. If you're thinking, "Oh, I can't memorize the whole thing," memorize the last three sentences. "He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son." You have a mission statement right there, don't you? For life.

John Bytheway: 30:37 I love the title of this, Hank and Brad, "The Living Christ," the Resurrected Christ. There was something I put in my little book about Christmas that I get more comments on. It's not original with me. A man named William B. Smart wrote *Church News* editorials, a super insightful little editorial in the *Church News* called "The Three Levels of Christmas."

John Bytheway: 31:01 He spoke of level one is Santa Claus and reindeer and jingle bells and the Christmas tree and how wonderful that is and how joyous it is and how we love that. But he said there's another deeper level called, and I'm just paraphrasing, the Silent Night level. That's the baby Jesus, of the Wise Men and the star, the shepherds, and that story that we tell in Luke, too.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 31:27 Dressing up all the kids in their bathrobes and doing the nativity.

John Bytheway: 31:33 We sing "Silent Night" and it's awesome. But he said his great line. He said, "But the man who keeps Christ in the manger will in the end be disappointed and empty." I think, yeah, the world is okay with the baby Jesus. But what about the Jesus that grew up and started giving us these invitations over and over, even some of them commandments. That's the third level. The man who keeps Christ in the manger, and there's a tendency to, well, yeah, we're all okay with the baby Jesus, but-

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 32:09 Pull him out once a year.

John Bytheway: 32:11 Yeah, and he invited us to follow HIM and to do even hard things, and to learn to become like him and to serve like him. The whole reason for Christmas is the adult Christ, the third level, "The Living Christ," as this document calls it.

Hank Smith:	32:29	You had the Santa Claus Level, the Silent Night Level, and the-
John Bytheway:	32:34	The Silent Night Level is the baby Jesus, yeah. Then the Living Christ or the adult Christ Level, the Redeemer, our Advocate, our Emmanuel. Without this level, the other levels wouldn't exist. There wouldn't even be Christmas. To paraphrase C. S. Lewis, always winter, but never Christmas. So it's fun to be talking on this third level of Christ, really the Easter level that's so critical, without which we wouldn't even have the other levels.
Hank Smith:	33:05	John, maybe it's because the baby Jesus doesn't demand much of us, right?
John Bytheway:	33:09	Exactly.
Hank Smith:	33:10	Like the adult Jesus does.
John Bytheway:	33:11	The adult, he made invitations and commandments and asked us to be like him. Talk about a tall order.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	33:20	A Christ who doesn't expect anything of us is making nothing of us. That's simply not the case, because we are his work and his glory.
Hank Smith:	33:34	Brad, there's this great second to the last paragraph. "We testify that He will someday return to earth." I mean that is a reality to us. The Lord is coming back. That is no myth, as we talked about before. This is no myth. He is coming back and we plan on it.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	33:51	Yes, and He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords. "Every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak and worship before him." This is beautiful doctrine because not only will people recognize Christ, but they will recognize his Church.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	34:17	That means that everybody who has fought against the Church, everybody who thinks that what we're doing is crazy, everybody who thinks that it's just this anomaly off in the western part of the United States and that it will never amount to anything, everybody will one day realize that Jesus is the Christ and that this is His Church, that we were not throwing our lives away by devoting ourselves to this cause, to this work.
Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox	34:52	That is a very comforting feeling for all of us on days when we begin to wonder and struggle to find motivation to keep going. Boy, one day we're going to face Christ and we are going to see Him and feel the excitement of that moment and feel the love

that he will share. We will have the satisfaction of knowing that our faith was not misplaced.

- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 35:22 Other people are going to have to have a big turnaround, where they realize that this Jesus that they heard about that they dismissed so easily is actually real. But for those of us who have clung to our faith, that will be a joyous day when others will realize that we were right all along.
- Hank Smith: 35:44 I know both of you. Your worlds revolve around the Savior. Your entire worlds revolve around him. It's the way you speak. It's the way you act. It's your family. It's everything. It all revolves around Him.
- Hank Smith: 35:59 I read this from Elder Oaks. He says, "What does it mean to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus?" He says, "Surely this includes keeping his commandments and serving Him. So, therefore, what, from this document, is if you're devoted to Him, keep His commandments and serve Him."
- Hank Smith: 36:16 He said, "But would it also include bearing witness of Jesus Christ, our Savior, and our Redeemer to believers and non-believers alike?" Then he says this, "To those who are devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, listen ... " How many people are listening to this, John, and they're devoted? John and Brad. They're devoted to the Lord. "To those who are devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, I say there has never been a greater need for us to profess our faith privately and publicly."
- Hank Smith: 36:46 So to me, that's a takeaway from this, that I want to do better at professing my faith, both privately, with my children and my wife, and publicly, with my friends, my ward, on social media.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 37:03 In the very last paragraph of the document, it says, "His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come." Therefore, it's because of our faith in Jesus Christ that we can be happy and that we can find joy.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 37:25 We can feel this gladness of the season all year long. We don't have to go through the post-Christmas trauma of saying, "Now I can't be happy until next December, when they start playing Christmas music again." We can feel joy all the time.
- Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 37:45 C. S. Lewis said this. He said, "Money, poverty, war, prostitution, classes, slavery, the long and terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy." That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own

way, without bothering about religion or, Hank, without bothering about commandments. God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 38:32

I testify that this document clearly points the way to happiness. I testify with those same words. "His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come."

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 38:53

President Benson used to say Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the right way, He is the saving truth, and He is the abundant life. I know that. I feel it. He is the happiness in my life.

Bro. Bradley R. Wilcox 39:10

And so, Merry Christmas to everybody. Thank you for listening to us as we've discussed this important document. As you've heard my testimony, if anybody ever asks me, "Why are you happy?" There's only one answer: because of the guy I share a birthday celebration with. Because of Jesus Christ. I say that in his name, amen. Hope everybody has a great Christmas. There's a heart coming to you. Merry Christmas.

Hank Smith: 39:44

We will be back for the Old Testament, *Come, Follow Me* curriculum. Thank you all for listening. We're grateful for your support. We couldn't do this without our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen. We love you, Sorensen family. To all Steve and Shannon's kids and grandkids, Merry Christmas. We love you.

Hank Smith: 40:05

We're grateful for our production crew. We have David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Kyle Nelson, and just for ... I had never mentioned him before, but he does a lot of work for us, Scott Houston. Scott, Merry Christmas. We hope you all will join us as we have a brand new season of followHIM.



followHIM
favorites
 with Hank Smith & John Bytheway



Hank Smith:	00:00	Hello, everyone. Welcome to followHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith. I'm the co-host of a podcast called followHIM, and I'm here with my jolly old, I was going to say jolly old St. Nicholas, John, but you're just jolly. You're not old. You're just jolly.
John Bytheway:	00:18	Jolly old St. Jonathan.
Hank Smith:	00:20	Jolly old St. Jonathan, who is here, and we are joined by our good friend, and just incredible scholar, Dr. Brad Wilcox. Welcome, Brad.
Bro. Bradley R....:	00:31	Great to be with you.
Hank Smith:	00:33	Yep. Now, followHIM Favorites is where each of us, John and I, and our guest, we choose a small portion of the lesson to go through. So, you, John, Brad, you guys, I think you know this drill. The lesson this week is on the document, "The Living Christ." So, you get to choose one portion from "The Living Christ" to share as your followHIM Favorite. John, let's start with you.
John Bytheway:	00:57	Oh. I like this beginning of let's see 1, 2, 3, 4, the fifth paragraph. "He rose from the grave to become the first fruits of them that slept." And it always reminds me of this is the ultimate, not just Christmas, but the Resurrection and the three levels of Christmas, which we talked about in the longer podcast. Level one is Santa Claus and Rudolph and ho, ho, ho, and Christmas trees, and stockings and all that, and it's great and it's fun.
Hank Smith:	01:24	The fun part, right?
John Bytheway:	01:24	Yeah. And we love it, and it's beautiful, but there's another level. Level two is the baby Jesus, Silent Night, the shepherds hearing the announcement and going to Bethlehem and everything. And we love that level as well, but we can't keep Christ in the manger. The third level is the adult Christ level. And

when I heard this from William B. Smart years ago, it changed the way I sing Christmas carols in church.

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|---------------------|-------|--|
| John Bytheway: | 01:50 | So, here's your assignment. Next time you sing a Christmas carol in Church, they're full of Level 2 and Level 3. We don't have any hymns in the hymnbook about Santa Claus, that's level one. But there are hymns that have Level 2 and Level 3, for example, "Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King." Okay? That's Level 2. The baby Jesus. "Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." Ooh, that's coming into the Atonement of Jesus Christ. That's coming into Level 3. |
| John Bytheway: | 02:17 | And then when you're seeing the later verse is "Hail the heaven-born Prince of peace," that's Level 2, hail the son of righteousness, light, and life to all he brings. Look at this part, risen with healing in his wings, because he rose. He rose from the dead, and none of these levels would be there without the level three of Christmas. As you sing hymns this year, listen for the level two and level three as you're singing, and watch how all of these hymns would not even happen were it not for the level three, that he rose from the grave to become the first fruits of them that slept. |
| Bro. Bradley R....: | 02:55 | I love that. I love that. Well, this is a season of gift-giving, and we've been giving gifts and receiving gifts. And so, my favorite is right here at the end of let's see, it says the one, two, I think it's the third paragraph here. It said, "His Atonement was a great vicarious gift on behalf of all who would ever live upon the earth." We've already received the greatest gift. No wonder at the end of the document, it says, "God, be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son. I hope in all the gift-giving and all the wrapping paper that we're throwing away, I hope that we can remember the greatest gift of all, the gift of His atonement and God's gift of his Son. |
| Hank Smith: | 03:55 | Brad, that is wonderful. And as I think, what can I give back to Him, my Follow Him Favorite is in response to yours, you both. What can I do for him? And it says in the second paragraph, He went about doing good yet was despised for it. And I think if the savior were here and I would say, "Lord, what can I do in response to your matchless gift that Brad talked about?" I think He might say something like that. "Go do good, go about doing good. Even if you're despised for it, go about and do good." So, maybe this Christmas season, it can be a renewal that 2022 is going to be a year of all of us going about doing good. And there's always a place, a time that you can help someone. Go out and do what He would do. |

Hank Smith:

04:44

Well, thank you both for joining us for followHIM Favorites. Now, we hope that you, the listener, will come join us on our full podcast. You're going to love it. Make it part of your Christmas celebration this week. Come listen to our full podcast, but if not, that's okay. Join us next week for our next followHIM Favorites.