

St. Timothy Presbyterian Church

# FAITH

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Sermons

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# When Life doesn't make Sense

June 18, 2014

Genesis 22:1-14

## A Life of Contradiction

Today's passage is very difficult to interpret and to understand. Does this story even make sense? Does God make sense? Does Abraham make sense? How could a loving God ask Abraham to sacrifice his own son even if it was just a test? And how could Abraham actually try and almost kill his son? It is a bizarre story. There is an Old Testament scholar named Walter Brueggemann and this is his commentary on this passage: "Take care not to explain the story. It will not be explained." I'm glad that he said that. If you try to explain that of which cannot be explained, you're destroying the power of the story. What cannot be explained gives power to this story. There is no moral explanation for this story. There is no spiritual justification. This story is simply unexplainable. Now, after trying so hard to find an explanation from this passage, a thought came to me, is life explainable? Does life make sense? Do human beings make sense? Life is full of contradiction, and we are full of contradictions.

I believe the epitome of contradiction that we know of is about the cross. The son of God was killed by God's own people on Earth. That is the epitome of contradiction. Surprisingly, that contradiction is at the core of our faith. The cross is at the core of our faith, and that contradiction is at the core of our faith. At the core of our faith, we accept that contradiction. No wonder St. Paul said, the cross is foolish to those who don't believe.

Our faith is a dangerous faith. It is dangerous because you have to accept the contradiction. We can never believe comfortably. That's not the nature of faith. We can never believe comfortably. No one can believe because everything has to make sense. At the core of our faith, there is contradiction. What Abraham did was totally unacceptable. It was also unacceptable to God, so God stopped him from doing what he was going to do. Abraham was very decisive and very fast. The angel of God had to move very quickly and called unto him twice, "Abraham, Abraham." I'm glad that God decided to intervene.

This reminded me of another story, the story of Jesus Christ on the cross. Isaac was silent, but on the other hand Jesus Christ cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And yet God, who intervened in Isaac's situation and saved him, God did not intervene when his own son faced a crisis. God was silent. For Isaac, God intervened, but before his own son, God did not intervene. Jesus' story and Isaac's story are very similar, yet very different. One story ended up with Isaac being saved and the other story ended up with Jesus being killed on the cross. Two very different results, but both stories are similar. These two stories expose life's total contradiction. It exposes very clearly life's total contradiction, and these stories also clearly show God's provision, even in life's devastating contradiction. God provided a ram for Abraham and God provided the resurrection for Jesus. Even in the situation of total contradiction and hopelessness, God provided the way out.

## God's Answer

We don't know the way out. We human beings don't know the way out. We cannot even imagine what that can be, but we do believe that our God is a God who provides the way out. Even when every door seems to be closed, God still somehow provides the answer that we ourselves cannot even imagine. You don't have the answer. You don't have the key to unlock the mystery of life. Only God knows the answer, and only God provides the key. Only God has the key. When nothing makes sense, when God doesn't make sense, does God work in us? Both stories answer with an emphasis on "yes." Even when everything does not make sense. God still works.

## Here I Am, O Lord

Another person who experienced the contradiction of life was Job. He was a righteous man, but he lost everything. He lost his children by the storm. He lost all of his possessions. He lost his health. Life didn't make sense to Job. "I've been righteous all my life. Why are all these things happening to me?" Life didn't make sense to Job. His friends tried to make sense of what happened to Job through their own worldview, with their own logic, they had to make Job the worst person in order to maintain their well-defined world, but Job could only see the contradiction. He could not see any logic behind what his friends said. The only thing that he saw was total contradiction. To Job, life didn't make any sense. In the end, God brought Job out and showed him the whole universe he created, and Job stood

before God with a simple heart and said, "Hineni." That is a Hebrew word, "Hineni," which means "here I am." "Here I am." This word "Hineni" is a very interesting word. Even though life didn't make sense at all to Job, by saying "Hineni," he simply left everything in God's hands and waited for God's answer.

Abraham used the same expression three times, "Hineni." He didn't know exactly how God would deliver him out of this dilemma, but he left everything in God's hands without trying to come up with his own easy solution. We are often trying so hard to make sense of what does not make sense. Some people make up crazy gods, with a small "g", and some people come up with strange conceptual constructs for their lives about life, and they just force those answers upon themselves. Some people simply reject the idea of God saying that it doesn't make sense.

Our heroes; Abraham, Job, and Jesus simply stood before God with the attitude of "Hineni," "Here I am." When life doesn't make sense, when life's tragedies hits you, when life's contradiction overwhelms you, don't try to come up with your solution: let us never lose our hope. Someday, you may experience the total contradiction of life. Don't come up with easy answers, and don't ever lose your hope. Let us see how God unlocks the mystery of life. Let us experience how God unlocks the mystery of life. Faith is not to believe when everything is believable. Faith is not to believe when everything is hopeful and when everything is understandable. The real challenge of our faith is when you cannot see, when you cannot hope anything, when you cannot understand. That's the real challenge of faith.

## **Never Lose Hope**

I shared that with the Korean Speaking Ministry members and a lot of them were crying because they have experience their own contradictions in life. They have experienced their own dilemma. They have experienced rock bottom. Faith is not to believe in what you can see. This is what St. Paul said about Abraham's faith: "hoping against hope, Abraham believed".

Viktor E. Frankl experienced total contradiction of life in the concentration camp in Auschwitz, and this is what he said in his book "Man's Search for Meaning": "We have come to know man, as he really is, after all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz. However, he's

also that being who enter those gas chambers upright with the Lord's prayer or the Shema Israel on his lips." Hoping against hope, that's what he believed, hoping against hope, that's what we also believe. Even when your life hits the rock bottom, if you have faith, you'll survive. That faith will create hope and that hope will give you the strength to fight life's cruelty. Life is cruel. When we hear the news around us, life does not make sense many times, and sometimes even God does not make sense but hoping against hope is still belief.

May God strengthen your faith and live your life with "Hineni," "here I am." I don't understand God. I don't understand what is going on in my life. When I look at myself, I don't understand. "Hineni"/"here I am" and God will unlock the mystery of your life. How often we recognize how feeble our faith is. When everything is believable, and everything is hopeful, we have strong faith, but when tragedy hits us and dilemma hits us, we soon realized that we don't have as much faith within our hearts. Here I am, Lord.

# Desensitized Generation

July 6, 2014

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

## What a Wonderful World

One of my favourite songs is What a Wonderful World. We even sang it once in our worship service. It is just beautiful. In that song you see the beauty, not only beauty of nature, but the beauty of life. Whenever I hear that song or sing that song. I feel that life is beautiful. So, let us look at the words there. I see trees of green, red roses too. I see them bloom for me and you and I think to myself, what a wonderful world. I see skies of blue and clouds of white, the bright blessed day, the dark sacred night. And I think to myself what a wonderful world. The colours of the rainbow so pretty in the sky are also on the faces of people going by. I see friends shaking hands saying, how do you do? They are really saying, I love you. I hear babies cry. I watch them grow. They will learn much more than I'll ever know. And I think to myself, what a wonderful world. That's how the song is. Nice song, nice image. But unfortunately, the world we live in, it's not this nice. Sometimes it is cold and cruel. People are not always nice, people are not always kind. Sometimes they're rude. I don't see friends always shaking hands. I see friends shaking their fists.

I don't see just blue skies and white clouds. I see storm and scary dark clouds. I don't see innocent kids being taken good care of and we enjoy seeing them grow, but I see kids being kidnapped. As we see this world. Can we always say what a wonderful world? Not really, some people say may say what an awful world. We experienced the rejection, betrayal, racism, sexism, bullying, and big disappointment with people and these experiences make our hearts hardened. We don't easily trust people anymore. We close our hearts to people. Since we don't like the feeling of pain, we shut down all our feelings and we become numb and desensitized. Not only the feeling of pain is gone, but all feelings are gone. We cannot even feel for life. Listen to what Jesus said about this generation. He said, "We play the flute for you and you did not dance. We wailed, and you did not mourn" How accurate his description is about the condition of our heart. We don't know how to dance. We don't know how to cry. We are all locked up inside. We may be too busy to feel. We may be so stressed that we



don't want to feel. After this hard work, you come home, and you just want to shut down. You don't want to think. You don't want to feel. If this keeps going, slowly our hearts will shut down.

We use all our energy to make a living and there is no energy left to take care of our souls, to take care of ourselves, and slowly we become hardened and hardened. You know, to live in this world, there is no problem to function as an emotionally deprived person. You can function still very well. You can work very well, but your emotion gets dried up and your soul gets so dry.

I want to feel for what other people may go through. When we watch news. We hear every day so many people die here and so many people die there. The kid is kidnapped with his grandparents. We always hear this news about terrible things going on in the world and after a while you get numb, you get desensitized. They just become numbers. So many die. 20, 30, 100, whatever. They just become numbers. We don't feel for what they may go through. It is pretty hard to feel anything about other people. We just don't know how other people may feel. We are losing the ability to feel. Our ability to make money and work efficiently gets better and better, but our ability to feel becomes worse and worse.

## **Rejoice with Those who Rejoice**

Saint Paul said in Romans Chapter Twelve, verse 15, this is what he said, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." In other words, dance, when the food is played, cry, when the sorrow is shared. But Jesus saw that we are not able to do that. We have lost the ability to feel for other people feel. When you don't feel for other people, how can you rejoice with them when they rejoice? How can you weep with those who weep? The degree of our intellectual level from our brain may be very high. You're very smart people, but the degree of our emotional level may become lower and lower. But I do believe the real intelligence is not in the brain. I do believe that the real intelligence is to know how others feel exactly. Jesus was like that. Jesus wept, Jesus got angry, but he knew exactly how to feel for the situation. I think that is really intelligence. I think that they are the real smart ones, not the people who are smart in the brain. People who know how to feel, what other people feel. Feeling my friends, it's not just feeling, feeling needs to be trained, otherwise we wouldn't even know how to feel, and our feelings can be very inappropriate. When you

should not be angry, you get angry. When you're supposed to be very happy, you don't feel any joy.

I remember myself going through that. I was the person who officiated the wedding and there's a beautiful couple in front of me and there were hundreds of people with beautiful clothes and then they shared laughter and joy. The person who was officiating the wedding, I felt nothing. I felt nothing. People's laughter that bothered me rather. When we don't know how to feel, that feeling needs to be trained. When we lose our ability to feel it is the worst feeling. It is much better to feel painful than feeling nothing. When you feel nothing it really drives you crazy. When you're in pain, when you feel pain, you know what is going on, but when you don't feel anything, it is a really hard to bear. To feel nothing is to feel no pulse of life and that is death.

## **Jesus Will Free you of Your Burdens**

A few years ago, a middle-aged man came to me and said "Reverend, I feel numb. I don't feel anything. I don't know what I like, and I don't know what I want to do. I don't even know what gives me joy and what satisfies me. I feel nothing. What should I do?" He asked. When you're not capable of feeling, you cannot truly appreciate the beauty of life. You become victims of hardened heartedness. You become a very harsh person. Jesus pointed this out in verse 18 and 19 "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he was a demon. The son of man came eating and drinking and they say, look, a glutton and a drunkard. A friend of tax collectors and sinners." All they did was judgment. They cannot feel for anything. They could have no empathy for others, no connectedness with others here at the heart level. They just judge everything from their brain, but they cannot connect with people at this heart level.

Modern people suffer from this heart and heart. Nothing good can come about, only judgment, criticism, cynicism and negative worldview. People have been too stressed out, people have been too busy, they have been too hurt. They have experienced too many failures and defeat. So, if you keep going that way slowly, slowly, you're running towards death, emotional death. My friends, we have good news. This is what Jesus said. "Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you'll find the rest. You'll find rest for your

souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Jesus can give us the true rest. The modern people have too much in their soul.

## **Transform your Pain into Compassion, Suffering and Love**

Their burdens are too heavy. Their soul is oppressed and depressed. They need the rest. We all need rest. Not just physical rest, but spiritual rest. Spiritual rest. That’s what we need. Jesus said to come to him. All those who are weary and are carrying heavy burden. He said, he’ll give you the rest. He will give you rest. Once you find true rest in Christ, you’ll find you will restore true feelings. Then you can really connect with people at the emotional level, at a real level. You can feel for what other people feel. Being spiritual, it’s nothing complicated. Being spiritual is being alive. All your sense, all your senses come alive. That’s what it means to be spiritual. When you’re spiritual, you can feel it because everything is alive and everything so sensitive. You can feel people’s joy. You can feel everything, even the pain. When you’re spiritual, you can feel the pain much more clearly. That’s why you can feel the pain for the pain of other people. When other people are going through suffering, you feel the pain, but the pain does not remain as pain, but the pain is transformed into compassion, suffering, love.

So, we need to restore that spiritual senses. Our senses need to come alive so that we may be connected with each other and we may be connected with God. Come to Jesus and find true rest. Don’t just run and run and run. Once in a while, stop and think about it. Do you feel what you feel? Many people don’t even know what they feel inside. So many things going on. They don’t even know what’s going on in their hearts. Do you feel what you feel inside? Find true rest in Christ, come to him. He will give you rest and then you’ll find true joy of life.

# Beyond the Struggle to Survive

July 13, 2014

Genesis 25:19-34

## **Beyond the Struggle to Survive**

I struggled quite a bit with this passage, not because this passage is difficult to understand, but because it was difficult to see what the message would be. I mean that story is easy to understand. We understand what is going on in that family, but it is hard to really come up with a message. What message can we get from the story like this? What is morale of this story? What message can we get from Esau or Jacob? What did we learn from a man who would give up his birthright for a bowl of stew? No matter how hungry he might be, and what we learned from a man who would take advantage of the vulnerable situation of his brother. The man sold a bowl of stew to his brother who was dying of hunger for his birthright. I don't think that was a fair deal. He was taking advantage of Esau. That was a difficulty that I went through in meditating on this passage. What is the message?

## **Struggle to Survive**

But Soon I realized that this story is our stories. These are the stories of survival. People struggle to survive for the sake of survival. They'll sacrifice almost anything. Survival becomes the priority. Survival becomes everything, and people struggle just to survive. Well, Jacob did was the same thing, Survival. Now to Jacob, life never came to him on a silver platter, in everything he had to fight out. He was a competitive man. Even from his birth, he had to hold onto his brother's heel not to lose. He wanted to come out first. Everything for Jacob, was a struggle. Even from the birth, it was a struggle. Nothing was given to him easily without his struggle. He always had to fight out to get what he wanted. To him, life was a struggle. This story shows well how life was a struggle for Jacob.

## **Dysfunctional Families Breed Struggle for Power**

Jacob grew up in a dysfunctional family. His father loved his brother Esau probably because he was more fun to be with. He was a hunter. He was manly, so the father loved his brother, because he goes out and then hunts the good stuff and so the father loved Esau, but the mother, Rebecca Love

Jacob. This tells us a lot about his family. Very dysfunctional family. There was already a division in the family in addition to natural sibling rivalry. There was favoritism of the parents. I don't think I'll raise kids that way. Our father love one kid, and the mother loves another kid. What kind of family is that? that is very, very dysfunctional. The children, poor children. They were caught up in this dysfunctional family dynamics and they were caught up in the conflict and power struggle.

It was more difficult to Jacob than to Esau because all the power was given to Esau, not to Jacob. Mother's love did not have much political power in the ancient society, but these days, mother's love is all the power. If the mother doesn't say yes, then nothing gets done. So, any family who doesn't listen to mother, their family will not survive but not like ancient society. All the political power was given to the father and the father was the one who control everything. And father's love had a tremendous political power and Esau had that power. And also, Esau enjoy the privilege as a first born. Even though he was born just few seconds earlier, he had all the privilege and rights as a first son of the birthright Jacob had nothing, as the second son and the Mama boy. He had no privilege, no entitlement, and no real power in his struggle to survive.

## **The Powerless use Deceit**

Jacob had only one way and that only one way was the way to trick Esau. That's what he learned. He knew the birthright was nothing to Esau. Esau did not care about birthright. The scripture says that Esau despised the birthright as a quiet boy, always staying home. Jacob knew how to cook, so he used his cooking skill to lure Esau. When Esau came home from the field, starved to death. Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau asked for stew, and Jacob, using the opportunity made a deal with Esau. He said, first, sell me your birthright. That was not fair. Esau was so hungry and a little bit foolish, he didn't care about birthright. I don't want to die of hunger. Well, why don't you just take the birthright, and then he took the stew.

Jacob Tricks Esau as a powerless person. He tricked Esau to survive. Often powerless people do that because that was only way that they could survive. And this wasn't the last time Jacob used his trick to trick Esau. When the Father Isaac was on his deathbed, he pretended that he was Esau and got his father's last blessing. That blessing only once he could give Esau pretended to be Esau. Then Jacob got the last blessing, this time,

the weak mother also was part of that plot. The mother helped Jacob to get that blessing. For the powerless people, the trick is their only weapon. I think Israel was able to identify with Jacob because Israel was always surrounded by the superpower, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, all this superpower, it was the only way they could survive was to use tricks and pretend to be powerless.

People do that. So, I think the Israelites were able to identify with Jacob a lot. That was how they survived. When you really look at the story very carefully, Jacob's trick did not do much help for Jacob because the birthright included the power of inheritance. He could get an inheritance from the father, but because Esau was so angry he wanted to kill Jacob, and Jacob had to flee away to his uncle Laban. So, he didn't get anything by tricking Esau. Actually, he had the birthright, I mean verbal agreement, but in practicality, he didn't get anything all his life. Jacob used tricks to survive. He even tricked his uncle Laban. He was a trickster, but Jacob's life, when you look at Jacob's life, Jacob's life did not end as the trickster. He had to go beyond the struggle to survive.

At the end of his life, he struggled with a strange man. This time it wasn't us. It was not a struggle to survive, this time it was a struggle to be blessed by God. He realized that blessing cannot be attained by tricks. And at the end, he saw the angels of God and he met the true living God, and he wanted to truly be blessed by God. He said to the stranger "I will not let you go unless you bless me.". There he truly met God. So Jacob called the place Peniel saying, "for I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved. That is a lesson that I learned.". Jacob, realize that God's blessing, you cannot conquer, you cannot take by tricks.

And then at the end he really committed everything to God in our struggle to survive. Sometimes we depend too much on our own power, on our resources, on our wisdom, and when we don't have those, we even use tricks to get our life going. When we don't have power, we even manipulate our situations. True blessings cannot come from our manipulations. We have to go beyond our struggle to survive. We have to put our lives in

## **Sharing is What Creates Power**

God's hands, in to God's hands we commit our life. We have to let go and let God. Jacob learn this through a hard lesson of his life. When Jacob met Esau for the last time, for many years, they were separated at the east. Jacob had to flee from home for many years. They were separate and when Jacob had to come back home, he had to meet Esau, and Esau brought 400 men. He didn't come out to be a brother, a friendly brother. He came out to kill Jacob. He came out to start war with Jacob, but somehow, he wrestled with God and there he was changed. He didn't manipulate the situation and in return the blessings that he stole from Esau, was returned back to Esau.

He realized that the blessings of life or not to conquer by tricks, but to share, Jacob went beyond his struggle to survive. Life is more than surviving. Life is to be celebrated by sharing our blessings. Right now, in Israel, there is a huge conflict between Gaza Strip and Israel. Hundreds of people are dying. Rockets and bombs they're going on and the Israel is planning to execute a land invasion, even more casualty. More conflicts. I mean, this message teaches us something, life is not only about fighting to get what you want, the blessing of God is not something you conquer by fighting out, or by tricks, the true lessons of life are to share what we have with others and that is a blessing. Korea is the only country right now which is divided north and south because of ideology, and I hope that even in that land, they may learn the wisdom of sharing their blessings with each other.

## **Live Truly**

You know life's too. Sometimes we are in our struggle to survive. We even manipulate our situations and we find out, but after we find out so much, what we realize is that cost blessing. It's not something that you fight to get only when you open your hands, open your fist, and then share life with each other. Then we experience the abundance of life. I hope that we can share while we have with others, if you have material resources you share that if you have a good heart, you share that. If you have love, you share that. By fighting, only thing that we will see is this disaster. So, I hope that we learn this lesson from the scripture every day, live truly progressive life together.

# Mary, The Woman of Courage

December 21, 2014

Luke 1:26-38

## Truth and Acceptance

Today's passage is a little uncomfortable passage. A virgin having a baby. That doesn't sound right. It was difficult, even for Mary, to accept that fact, to accept the uncomfortable truth, and so she asked, "how can this be since I am a virgin how is it possible?", so it was very difficult for Mary to hear this news and very difficult to accept it. But the angel said to her, "Nothing will be impossible with God."

As I was reading this, how could she say that? How could she accept that? Was she a religious fanatic to accept things like that? Or was she mentally not healthy to just accept? "yeah, I'm a virgin, but I'll accept it". Just from this passage, this is really hard to say, what Mary was really like, what kind of person Mary was? No ordinary woman can accept what the angel said even though it was an angel, no ordinary women can accept what the angel said to her, and you know she was a very ordinary woman from a village. There was nothing special about this Mary. The scripture doesn't say anything about Mary. She was simply an ordinary woman. But as I reflect on this person, Mary, I realized that she was not just an ordinary woman. She was a very strong woman. Not only was it difficult for Mary to accept the birth of a person while she was a virgin, even though that was a very difficult, but more difficult thing was to live with the son of God, to raise the son of God and to live with son of God for the rest of her life. It was difficult to be the mother of the son of God. As soon as Jesus was born, her life became very very difficult. Until then, she lived a very ordinary life, a comfortable life, but as soon as the Jesus was born, trouble after trouble. The first thing was Herod tried to kill all the babies, so when Joseph, her husband to be and herself had to run away to Egypt and then live in a foreign country, it was trouble after trouble.

## Suffering yet Faithful

Then when Jesus was a teenager, it was difficult to really handle this is a teenager boy. Once they went to the temple and Jesus on the way that they realize that their son was gone. So, they went back to temple and



Jesus was sitting there with the scribes and teachers and discussing important things or whatever, I don't know what they're talking about, but he said, "did you know if I'm supposed to be in my father's house?" Things like that. How can they handle the kids like that? Not even that, he's too big for his mother to control. He was too big to guide and control, he was always ready to run into trouble. I mean he was the Son of God, but he ran into trouble all the time. People always criticized him, accused him and sometimes even accused Jesus of being crazy and demon possessed. How as a mother, how can you take that? How can you take that when somebody said, "your son is crazy, and your son is demon possessed?" How could Mary, how could a mother take that your child demon possessed and crazy? Mary had to go through all this troubles and difficulties and hardship, you know having a baby as a virgin is just the beginning of the troubles in her life. All throughout her life, she went through so much trouble because of Jesus.

It was hard to be a mother of the son of God. I don't think you'll ever envy that, I think you just want to be the mother of an ordinary person. You don't want to be a mother of the son of God. Then she experienced something that any mother should never experience, she experienced the crucifixion of her own son dying on the cross. She was right there, strong women. John records that, John says "When Jesus died on the cross, one of the seven last words of Jesus as a mother. This is your son, to John, and then John this is your mother". She experienced something that she should never have experienced as a mother. So, Michelangelo painted this a pity and a suffering and sorrow in his sculpture called Pietà, and that is the sculpture Michelangelo made. Her son, her dead son, the corpse she was holding.

It was difficult for Mary, the mother to live as a mother of the son of God. So, when Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word". That's not an easy thing to say. It was not a casual thing to say or more, it was a pietistic thing to say, what she said came from the depth of her heart, shows the faith of Mary. She was an ordinary woman, but she became a very special woman because of this faith. "Here am I the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me, according to your word". This statement was her statement for the rest of her life. It was not just this time she said she lived with that statement, "let it be with being, according to your word I am your servant". That's how she lived for the rest of her life

after she made that statement when she received the message from the angel, she lived like that.

## **How We should Live**

Luke, the Gospel writer, the author that saw all that, was all along with Mary. Luke saw what Mary did and saw how Mary lived like that, "Let it be with me according to your servant". Even after Jesus died, Mary was with the disciples and this is how Luke records that. When they had entered the city, this is after Jesus died. They are the disciples. They all went to enter the city. They went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Phil, Thomas and Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon the zealot and Judas son of James. These are 11 disciples. Judas was not there, he already committed suicide. All of them were constantly devoting themselves to prayer together, including Mary, the mother of Jesus. As well as his brothers. Mary's life, how she lived her life, and how she lives her life after even after Jesus died, Mary was a wise woman. She was a humble woman. She was a strong woman. She was a woman of courage. She showed to all of us how we should live, "I am your servant Lord, let me be with you according to your word".

That's wisdom, that's how we should live our lives. That is the best way to live our lives, my friends like Mary, we sometimes experience the uncomfortable truth as Michelle prayed eloquently in the world, there are many mothers who are crying because of the uncomfortable truth that they experience in their lives, and sometimes my friends not only those mothers, but we all sometimes experience the uncomfortable truth about our lives, about us, others around us, things that we don't want happen to us, life is not that easy. Things that we don't like to happen to us. Our situations are too difficult to handle. Our problems are beyond our capacity to deal with and I see many people who don't deal with situations very well. When these things happen, they get really, really stressed out and they complain and try to manipulate the situation with their shallow understanding of wisdom. They try to manipulate the situation and if everything doesn't work out, then they give up and they become totally helpless and hopeless. Mary, she experienced the uncomfortable truth. What did she did not want to happen to her? She did not fight that. She was a woman of thinking. She sat down, and she accepted it, "Let it be with me according to your word, I am your servant".

When we experience similar situations as Mary, what we need is faith or they need to trust in God and you will see how God will work miraculously. The other day, this man from KSM received really unfair treatment in his work, racism when I heard that, but he resists and forgets. One day he said to himself, "Ok I will give everything to God" and the next day, all the problems were solved. He experienced the miracle of his life and he told me that "Moksanim, I received the best gift, Christmas gift this year" Life's impossible situations.

Nothing is impossible with God who strengthens us. Some of you may go through very difficult problems in your life, don't try to handle with your wisdom and power that work in your lives, and experience and witness the miracle that is that can happen in you. Mary, because of her faith, she allowed the savior, the Messiah to fulfill God's will, without Mary, Jesus would not have done what he could do. She was a wonderful woman, who brought a miracle to the world, who brought the best gift to all of us, and in the end, she never lost her faith in God. She did well as a mother, as a mother of the son of God, and I'm thankful that she did well. She made it possible for the Messiah to work out the salvation for all of us. My friends, Merry Christmas and think about Mary and every faith in every possible situation, don't give up. Let it be with me according to God's will and God will work out for you.

# Thank God for His Faithfulness

December 28, 2014

Philippians 1:3-6

## **Life isn't Always Easy**

We have grown a lot. We have experienced many wonderful new things. We have done a lot of good things. We have many things to celebrate personally and as a community and as the years' theme indicated, we have experienced much change as well.

It was a wonderful year, not because it was necessarily any easier. Life is not good all the time. At times, it was very painful and sometimes the future did not look bright and we did not see any hope. Sometimes we even lost our passion, desire and appetite for life at times. We struggle with our job and career. We were all worrying about the future and financial assignments. There were times that we stayed up all night because of the worries about what is going to happen in the future. We struggled with our family issues and personal issues. Sometimes we seriously wondered about where our lives were going, "What am I doing all this time and where am I going from this point on?" We had moments of frustration and anger and we didn't know what to do with this anger within us. And there were also times when we sighed and cried uncontrollably.

Life is wonderful but not because it is given to us on a silver platter. Life is wonderful in spite of frustrations, disappointment, anger, and fear. And in spite of all these, we still say life is wonderful. People are happy not necessarily because their life is any easier than other people. There are some people I see who always have on a cheerful face, but I know deep down what they're really going through. It is because of their bright and cheerful attitude towards their life that they can have a cheerful face. In traffic, you can easily get frustrated and that will ruin your day, or you can take it easy and accept that of which cannot be controlled. It all depends on your attitude. When you are caught up in an argument that is going nowhere, you can either push your point or simply back off. It is your attitude that matters. What I realized was that whenever something happens to us, it does not kill us.

## **A for Attitude**

Our attitude either kills us or makes our situations better. Whatever we experience in life cannot destroy us, but our attitude towards the experience can either destroy us or save us and make our lives better. So, I realized that the events that happen to us do not have value in themselves. It only has value by what they do to our lives.

So even if it is really bad, we cannot attach a value to whatever happens to us itself and what that does to our lives. There's one Korean or Chinese word, it's called 'saegongjida'. The story behind this word is that one day a boy found a horse in the fields and came home with it. When he came home, the whole village came to him and told him how lucky he was since he had a horse now. The village was so envious of that family. One day, the boy was playing on the horse, but then he fell off and broke his neck. The whole village came by and said "Oh, how unfortunate you are." The next day, a war broke out and every son was taken to the army, but the son who had broken his neck did not have to go to army. And now all the village people came by and said, "How lucky you are that your son doesn't have to go to the army." The events themselves don't have any value. In the end, sometimes we think that our events are really bad but that experience may not be as bad as you think.

I realized that we're not very good at dealing with what happens to us. We often make it worse. When bad things happen to us they are difficult to handle because they are bad experiences. They themselves are very difficult to have but we make them worse with our attitudes. Let's say you make a mistake, you move on. Everybody makes mistakes. By not forgiving yourself and by not accepting yourself, you're making your life much more miserable than it should be. Let's say you lost a job by being too critical about your performance, about your situation and about yourself. You are making your own problems more difficult. Let's say you have health issues, by worrying about your health excessively, you make that disease worse or may even be diagnosed with another type of disease.

Having a bad experience itself is difficult to handle. The underlying problem is that we are making our bad experiences worse because of our wrong attitude. Essentially, we should have a good attitude, right? But a good attitude is not possible by trying harder and it's not possible by a strong will.

Making a hard effort and working harder does not last long. I realized that there is something within us that we believe and without that thing that we believe, it doesn't matter how much effort we put in it because it does not help us to obtain a better attitude.

## **Start to Finish**

The real question that we should be asking is, what is that thing that we must believe in our lives? St. Paul said something related to this. It was the philosophy and theology of St. Paul when he said: "Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

St. Paul wrote this letter in prison. His situation was not that great. He could've told himself, "My goodness, what am I doing in prison? I've been preaching the Gospel to the Philippians, to the Thessalonians, to the Romans and all these places. I got a call and it was to preach the gospel to all those people, so what am I doing in prison?" Instead, the first thing he said were greetings. Then he says, "I thank my God." He says, "I thank my God." That is amazing. Paul says, "I am confident in this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

That's what was the core of his existence, his spirit, his heart, and his thoughts. He believed that God who began good work, will complete it. What God began, God will finish. That is what St. Paul believed and that is what we believe. What God began in me, God will finish.

## **What Does God Want from Me?**

What is important is what does God want to do through me. My personal ambitions are not what Paul is talking about. When your personal ambition is frustrated, don't get so discouraged. Due to your discouragement and disappointment, you may hinder what God wants to do through you. What is important is not your personal ambition, what is important is what God wants to do through you.

Sometimes, I catch myself falling into my old personal ambitions. My ambition takes over and it controls my life, so I get overly stressed,

frustrated, and unhappy. I can always just find myself saying, “Oh, I’m doing this for God and I’m doing the gospel right.” It’s easier to justify that because I’m in ministry. I always still work for God. I always do work for people, so I can justify myself all on doing all of these things for people. But ultimately, personal ambition is for your own personal glory. Whether you’re doing it through ministry, through other achievements, or through your children, it doesn’t matter.

Chasing after personal glory is just like a bubble, it pops and then it disappears. That’s why we can never fully satisfy ourselves by chasing after our personal ambitions. If you do that right now, you’ll be left with nothing. But if our life is chasing after what God wants to do through us, then we do not need to worry about life. What God began, God will finish. That gives us stability and confidence. We’ll then be able to bless others. The people around are not your competitors, they are the ones that you bless. We’ll have strength to take on life’s difficulties with perseverance and to enjoy life’s totality, not just the small parts in life. We cannot only enjoy candy that give us pleasure, but also medicine that gives us healing. I believe that God worked what he wanted to do through you in 2014. Whether you were aware of it or not, he did wonderful things through you. I thank God for that. In 2015 I hope that we are more aware because it is awakened within us. When you’re more aware of it, your life becomes richer and more abundant.

God is faithful, and I thank God for his faithfulness. In the midst of up and downs, there’s a constant truth and that is God’s faithfulness. God began a beautiful work in you and he wants to do it. In 2015, remember this: don’t make your life problems worse by worrying about it, but trust in God and let God work out your life.

# The Lord God made them All

January 18, 2015

John 1:43-51

## **Mystery**

What I wanted to talk about today is a little bit of a difficult topic. I'm going to talk about the mystery. I'm going to talk about reasoning. I'm going to talk about how those two are working together. So, it's a difficult topic. The Christian journey is a journey into God and journey into God is a journey into mystery. By nature, journey into God, is a journey into mystery. We don't really know what the outcome will be. We see Phil and Nathaniel in today's story, when you look at it there are a lot of missing holes. Jesus was in the side that Moses talked about and the proverbs talked about and how Nathaniel knew that Jesus was the son of God and the King of Israel. There's no explanation.

They just made a confession. Sometimes the Bible has that when there's a mystery aspect, there is no explanation necessary. But their lives were completely changed after this incident they neither expected nor imagined that their lives would turn out that way. Before they met Christ, they were probably living very normal and ordinary lives. Then all of a sudden, once they met Jesus Christ, their lives turned around completely, and they followed Jesus. In that sense, life is a mystery beyond our control and our power. We cannot always predict our life's outcome. These days I really, really enjoy seeing my grandson, Nolan. I don't have much time to visit them and actually see him, but Josh sends me pictures and video clips. So, my daughter Grace is from Boston, so she came and stayed with us and we sat down and watched the pictures and video clips.

## **Choice**

She said, I can watch this all day, and then cry. Everything is so beautiful. It's wonderful to see your grandson. But while I was asking myself what future is waiting for him? What will he be like in 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, 40 years later? And I realize that I don't know, it is hidden. It is hidden to us. It is hidden because it is part of our life. We live our lives in the natures of the known and the unknown. The certain and the uncertain. The revealed and the hidden. Nobody lives with absolute certainty. Nobody



should claim that they live with absolute certainty. Philippe and Nathaniel didn't expect at all that their lives would turn out the way it turned out. It was a mystery to them. Yes, it was their choice. But when you look at it and yet it wasn't totally your choice. Don't you feel that sometimes, yes you made a choice, but it wasn't really totally your choice? Life is like that, we think it's our choices, but we realized that it wasn't purely our choices. Life turned out all right, but not necessarily because of our good choices. Some of the times, life turns out in spite of our bad choices. We didn't always make the right choices to make our life good, sometimes life turned out good in spite of our bad choices.

We are thankful to God for that. There is a force that leaves our lives much more powerful than the power of our choice. That's what Philip and Nathaniel experienced in today's scripture passage. Nathaniel was a skeptical person. like most of us. Most people who live in the 21st century is very skeptical. Philip came to him and said, oh I met this great guy he was the one that Moses and the prophets were talking about. It's Wonderful. And then Nathaniel said, "What good comes out of Nazareth?". And Philip's answer is so refreshing. Come and see, come and see. That's the formula of John, come and see don't try to figure out, come and see. You actually have to come and see. What good can come out of Nazareth? That was Nathaniel's prejudice, in the end, he was proven wrong. The real good came from Nazareth, Jesus Christ came from Nazareth, and then ultimately you are the son of God and the king of Israel.

## **Skepticism**

There is another famous skeptical person in the Bible and his name was Thomas. Thomas was another skeptical person. It's interesting, both people came out from Johns Gospel. Nathaniel comes out right in the beginning, in chapter one right at the beginning of John's story. Thomas comes out at the end of the story, almost like John was trying to say how a skeptical person became a believer. From the beginning to the end he put those two people right there. After Jesus was resurrected. Thomas wasn't there, so when he was soon there he said, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hand and put my fingers in the mark of the nails and put my hand into his side

I will not believe. Thomas wasn't there, and he said this, "But as soon as he encountered Jesus, he didn't put his finger there. He didn't put his hand in

his side. He didn't do any of that". That skepticism evaporated. As soon as he encountered Jesus, the only thing that came out of his mouth was the greatest confession. My Lord and my God. In the entire Gospel, no one ever said that Jesus was going to die. The highest confession was that Jesus was the son of God, but nobody dared to claim that Jesus was God. And from the lips of Thomas, we hear a confession, my Lord, and my God. They both overcame their skepticism when they met Christ. You know, skepticism comes from our intellectual reasoning, but when we encounter the divine, our reasoning stops. That's what it is. When you read the Bible. That's what happens. When you encounter the divine the reasoning stops, and something more powerful than the reasoning takes us over. That's why religion can be very, very dangerous.

Also, religious fanaticism was caused because of this aspect of God. You can justify almost anything in the name of God, and the name of God, they did horrible things. In history and right now we use God to justify their hidden beliefs, their anger, their hatred, and the fear of being powerless. We don't condone that. They simply use God for their purpose. But encountering God is the most beautiful thing. The most beautiful thing that we human beings can experience. It is not something we can figure out or explain. There is such a thing as figuring out God, you can never figure out God.

## Reasoning

That doesn't mean we put aside our reasoning. We don't use our reasoning to figure out God, we use our reasoning to understand God deeper. As we encounter the divine, all our reasoning stops. We are simply in awe of God's presence. That's what we have seen today's scripture. When Jesus calls Phillip, Phillip did not try to figure out, he simply understood that he was the one Moses and the prophets were talking about and that was what he communicated to Nathaniel. In the beginning, responded skeptically, but that was before he met Christ. But as soon as he met Christ, he made his confession. He was a son of God and king of Israel.

Being able to reason is the power we human beings have. When we lose it we become very uncomfortable and vulnerable? It is a power to protect us and build our lives. With reasoning, we make our living. With reasoning, we make our judgment. With reasoning, we say what is right and what is wrong. So being able to reason is very, very important in our lives. When your

reasoning is screwed then it becomes a problem because he really drives our lives. With reasoning, you can pretty much control your life. Yes, with reason, we can control our lives', but we cannot experience life with reasoning. You can control it, but we cannot experience God. You can experience life. Life is not to be controlled, life is to be experienced.

God is not to be figured out. God is to be understood. God is not to be controlled. God is to be encountered. God who is controlled is not God anymore. It is an idol that we create for our own convenience. God gave us this greatest gift, reasoning. I think that's a wonderful gift that God gave to us. If he didn't then we would become quite arrogant with our reasoning. It is the greatest power we human beings are proud of, and rightly so.

But we have to understand that this power of reasoning can limit us, blind us, and keep us locked in our own small world. We don't experience the magnitude of life. We don't experience the love and joy of life. We just live with a taste of a little control we make in our lives. As Nathaniel encountered Jesus, he was in awe. He was quite shocked by how deeply Jesus knew about him. And then Jesus said, "Are you surprised only with this?". And then he said an amazing thing. You don't see the greater thing you don't know yet, what that greater thing is. You're just surprised with this. You'll see a greater thing. Jesus really showed what the greater thing about life is, that is what the life journey is all about. As we take the life journey, we will see greater things in life. In that sense, I'm an optimist. I always believed that life will get better.

## Reflection

I always believed that everything will work out for the better, and I believe that the present is always better than the past. I have beautiful memories in the past but still right now, the moment I'm living, the present time I am living in is better than the past. We'll see greater things in life. To do that, we need to be opening to fully encounter Christ. Jesus where do you want to take me? If you're with me I will go with you. Jesus, what do you want me to experience in life? I'm scared, but if that's what you want me to experience, I believe to experience that. We have to trust God.

God wants you to experience the most beautiful things in life, but we have to trust him. Our journey is a journey into mystery, our journey is a journey

to experience greater things in life. As we meet God our eyes will be opened and see greater things. Jesus said to Nathaniel, heaven will open, but we have to trust in God. With small things that you've created. Don't be bound by it. Don't be scared of going beyond. Don't let your fears stop the journey. Have the courage to take into a deeper level of our living, deeper joy, deeper love, and a deeper sense of justice. In that journey, we will experience that life is wonderful. All things beautiful and bright. Yes, life is wonderful my friends. Don't be scared of taking on this journey. God will be with you and God will take you to the most beautiful place.

# You are not an Orphan

May 3, 2015

John 14:15-21

## Embrace All of Life

At every Korean session meeting, we have training. I had to train them with a book by Henri Nouwen. The book is called “A Spirituality of Living”. Before the session meeting, for about 30 minutes, we talk about the spirituality of being an elder and leading the congregation. Hopefully I will do that with the English-speaking congregation too. And from that book, this phrase caught my attention, and this is what Henri Nouwen said, “Jesus calls us to gratitude. He calls us to recognize that gladness and sadness are never separate. That joy and sorrow really belong together, and that mourning, and dancing are part of the same movement. How true that is about our life. Our life is a combination of all this. If you demand that only good things should happen in your life, then it will be pretty difficult for you to live with gratitude.

You wish that this will happen, but not all the time that happens. But if you demand that, that should happen all the time, then it will be pretty difficult, to live with gratitude. Knowingly and unknowingly, you’ll build some kind of resentment within you. So, I see a lot of people living with some kind of resentment with them. They don’t really know that they have this resentment within them, but when the situation arises, then you realize, how come I have so much resentment? That resentment was unconsciously accumulated and built up within you. So, if you demand that life should be in one way, whether you like it or not, you will most likely build and accumulate some kind of resentment. Life is a mixture of good memories and regrets, love and disappointments, joy and sadness. If we cannot accept this fact of life, we will have a hard time living meaningfully in this world.

Gratitude is to embrace all of life. That’s what gratitude is. Gratitude is to embrace all of life, the good and the bad, the joyful and the painful, the victory and the defeat. Gratitude, if you don’t embrace all of your life, gratitude is not possible. This is what Saint Paul said, “in any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going

hungry and of having plenty and of being in need.” In all circumstances. In other words, he learned the secret of embracing all of life. He had a secret of embracing all circumstances. That’s why he could say be joyful always. That’s why he said, give thanks in all circumstances because he learned the secret of being able to embrace all of life, and then right after that, after this passage, this is what he said, this is his secret. “I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

In other words, I can embrace all of life through him who strengthens me. That was Paul’s secret. So then gratitude is not a psychological phenomenon. Gratitude is a spiritual thing. If you don’t have God through whom you can do all things, then gratitude is not possible. When we have God within us, fully within us, who strengthens me, then we can embrace all of life. Not just the good things that we like to cherish, but bad things that we don’t want. That is where deep gratitude comes from. In today’s passage, Jesus promised I will not leave you orphaned. I will not leave you orphaned. He will never leave us alone. That is Jesus’ promise. In your darkest moment, Jesus will not leave you alone. That is Jesus’ promise to you. No matter what circumstances you may go through in your life, Jesus will never leave you alone. Jesus lived a very short time here on earth, and after that he left us. Thirty-three years. He left us, he said, I’ll never leave you alone, and then he sent the Holy Spirit to us, and this was what Jesus said, “and I will ask the father and he will give you another advocate (that means the Holy Spirit) to be with you forever. This is the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you and he’ll be in you.” You are not alone. The spirit is within you. In your life circumstances, sometimes you’ll experience a lot of bad things that you don’t want, but even in that moment, Jesus will be with you.

## **You are not Alone**

Often when life’s tragedy hits us, suffering hits us, difficulties hits us, you’re scared and you’re not quite sure about the uncertainties of the future. But you know what? What is the most common emotion people experience when they were hit by tragedy? Deep loneliness, that’s what they experience. When life’s hardships hit us, we feel alone. We feel like we’re abandoned. In that deep loneliness, we feel that we are abandoned, all by ourselves. When Jesus Christ was on the cross, he said, my God, my God,

why have you forsaken me? Jesus is not crying out. Jesus is not asking why God has abandoned him, but he was expressing the deep loneliness that any human being will experience when they go through suffering and hardship.

We feel like nobody seems to care. We feel like nobody seems to understand the deep pain we go through, and we feel like nobody can walk along with me in this dark path. "I'm all alone who has to go through this." We become sad, lonely, and later even angry. When things are good, you enjoy the companionship, but when deep darkness and pain hit us, we realized the limit of the companionship, limit of what the companionship can offer to us. Ultimately nobody can help, we realize. That's reality, that's when we feel alone. Not only do you feel alone, you're all by yourself, but you know what you also experience? You understand that you're not strong enough to be able to go through this all by yourself and you feel alone so you feel so helpless. You feel so alone, but you also know that you are not strong enough to be able to go through all that on your own.

That's when your spirituality becomes really important, not religiousness. Spirituality, deep connectedness with God. That's when the spirituality kicks in. Until then, you don't even know what spirituality does, but when you experience this, then spirituality kicks in and then you realize how important it is. Depending on whether you can believe that the spirit is within you or not, the results are quite different; either you can stand tall or collapse. You know one thing good about experiencing this deep loneliness is that when you experience this deep loneliness, that's when you can meet God. You can only meet God when you're alone. When you're always with other people, you cannot meet God, but when you experience that deep existential loneliness, the feeling that you're all by yourself, that's when God comes in. That's God's attribute. God is strange. When we are broken and totally vulnerable, God comes, appears to us when things are all right, somehow God disappears, but when we go through that hardship and difficulty, God's slowly comes in and then you see God. So, one thing good about feeling this deep loneliness is that you can experience and meet God in a real way.

When everything goes alright, we don't feel alone. We feel right in with the people around us. Well, when we go through pain, we experience loneliness, and we feel like an orphan, Henri Nouwen said, "God is hidden

in our pain.” So only when you go into pain, you find God. God is hidden in our pain. It is so true. When you feel like you are orphan, that’s when you realize that you’re not an orphan. When you don’t feel like an orphan, then you don’t even know that you’re not an orphan, but when you feel like I’m an orphan, that’s when you realize that you are not an orphan. You’re not alone because you meet God. You strongly feel that “I’m not an orphan. God is with me.”

## **Trust in God**

My friends, you have two choices. When life’s tragedy and hardships hit you, are you going to respond with resentment and become cynical, or are you going to search for God who is hidden in your pain? If you hold onto your pride, then you will build resentment, but if you let go of your pride and hold onto humility, then you’ll be able to search for God, hidden in your pain. When you’re holding onto your pride, that will destroy you and your life will be diminished, but when you hold on to God within you, then you will be saved, and life will be enriched. I know some of you went through tremendous suffering. You have a choice, which one are you going to hold onto? Life’s journey is not possible without feeling deep loneliness. That’s very much part of the real journey. Ultimately in that journey, you have to walk alone.

You have no choice but to do that. That’s what spiritual journey is all about. Somehow this year, you will experience difficulties, hardships, and prejudice in your life. When you encounter them, understand the theme of this year. You are on this journey, spiritual journey. In that journey, you’ll encounter both the good and bad, joy and sadness. That’s what a journey is. During that journey, you will experience some difficulties and devastation, helplessness and hopelessness, but ultimately that journey will take you to fullness. When God is with us, what is important is trust. Do you trust God is within you or not? When you trust, then it will come alive. You’ll come out of it with stronger faith and stronger character. If you hold onto your deep-rooted bitterness, you will fall, and you will not be able to get up. Life will be full of complaints, but when you hold onto the spirit within you, then gratitude will start kicking in and then you can embrace all of your life.



# Let God Control You

May 31, 2015

John 3:1-16

## Living a Reflective Life

Last week I had a visitation from one of our church members. She told me that she had tried to fit God into her life but now she tries to fit her life into God. That was a pretty profound statement. What does it mean to be a Christian? Being a Christian, I realized, is not about living a thoughtless life just full of activities and doing things. The Christian life is very much a reflective life. It's about asking, 'What am I doing?' and 'How is it connected to God?'. Whatever is happening in my life, whatever emotion that I go through, you kind of reflect on it and then understand God better and, as a result, your life better. I think that's what the Christian life is all about. Christian life is not just about doing good things and being full of activities, the Christian life is very much about leading a reflective life. Spiritually you reflect about your life in that way. It does not necessarily mean the Christian is a better person than the non-Christian, but you continuously reflect about what God wants to do and what God is doing in your life. So that reflective aspect of life is very much ingrained in Christian life and very much a part of life.

I saw that woman living a true Christian life. She's continuously reflecting on whatever is happening in her life with God. And then she found this kind of profound statement: I used to try to fit God into my life, but now I realized that I should fit my life to God. And she has realized the secret, the truth about life. I think that's what a Christian life is. You try to fit yourself in God because that's what it means to be born again.

Maybe the Christian life is simple. You used to be at the center and then you try to even use God and fit God into your life, but after you are born again, you truly understand God's theory. You try to have God in the center and then you fit your life into God, that's what it means to be born again. Being born again does not make you a totally different person or a fanatic. Being born again is a reorientation of your thinking. You don't put yourself first anymore, you put God first. That is the criteria, it is simple as that. So, let us look at our life, do I put God first or do I put myself first? Can I really

create myself being a Christian when I put myself first before God? Jesus taught us this interesting and ironical truth. This is what scripture says: the more you control your life, the more you lose control over it. The more you try to find yourself, the more you will lose yourself. Rather if you lose yourself, figuratively speaking, then you'll find yourself. I think that's amazing, truly amazing. That's what I find in myself. The more I try to find myself, the more I lose myself. But when I forget about myself, I end up finding myself.

## **We Cannot Control Life**

Life is not in my control, it's a simple fact. It's not in my control, and that's what Jesus kept telling us. To Nicodemus, he said this about a person being born again (John 3:8): "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes to. So it is with everyone who was born of the Spirit". Jesus taught us the truth about life. You go out into the field and then you feel the wind and think, oh, the wind comes from the north. You hear the sound of it and you feel the direction of the wind, but you cannot control the direction of the wind. You don't even try to control the direction of the wind. I wonder how many times we have tried to control the direction of the wind of our life. We are very clear about the fact that we cannot control the direction of the wind, but I'm not sure whether we're truly clear about whether we can control the direction of the wind or not. And then sometimes we try to control the wind of our life. I think trying to control the wind of our life is an illusion. The faster you wake up from that illusion, the faster you will find joy and freedom.

I do believe that there are two different kinds of order in life. The order we bring in our life by trying to control it is very different from the order God brings to our life when we surrender ourselves to God. The order we create for ourselves is very rigid, limited, and sometimes suffocating. When we're younger, that order was okay because it makes life safe and controllable. But as you become older, that order becomes suffocating. Rather than helping you feel safe, it inhibits you. You cannot be satisfied with the order that you create for yourself. The order that God brings to us is open, limitless, and liberating. Life is like this— first you start with order and then that order gets destroyed, then you bring in another order and then that order get destroyed, and so on. We cannot just choose one order and let it just fit our life continuously until we're done because there is no growth,

there is no liberation. The essence of life is always the old life perishing, and then discovering a new order. The order we create is rigid, but the order God creates is open, limitless, and liberating.

## **Resilient, Spiritual Life**

The order we create for ourselves will be shattered by the hardships that hit our life. Strangely, the order that God brings to us when hardships hit our life enables us to somehow find a new shape. It molds our life into a different way and a new order. There are two orders that express strength. One is hard, the other is resilient. The real strength of a Christian life or spiritual life is rather resilient than hard. When something is hard, and the pressure hits it, it sustains for a while but when more pressure hits it, it breaks. But resilience is like when the pressure hits you, it goes down, comes back up again, goes down and comes back. It never breaks. I think the Christian life, or spiritual life, has the strength of resilience.

Life in the spirit has tremendous freedom and yet tremendous resilience. When you build your life with your own strength, you have no choice but to build a small life. No matter how big you are, you are very small compared to God. The kind of life we build with our own strength is one where we have no choice but to live a small life. That life's future is precarious. But with the spirit, your future is unknown and yet you're in the good hands of God.

## **Let Go of Struggles**

My friends, work hard and live diligently but don't try to control your life. Let the spirit guide you. Let the spirit mold you. Let the spirit shape you. You'll find a new dimension of order. When you surrender and let the spirit guide you, all of a sudden, you'll be taken to another level and another dimension of joy. You will struggle with life; how can we live without struggle? Every day's a struggle, every week is a struggle. Everyday something else happens. We cannot live without struggle, but I hope that your struggle is not the struggle that tries to hold onto something that you cannot hold, that's a meaningless struggle.

Let your struggle be a struggle that you can let go of. I know some of our members have financial problems, they struggle so much. If they tried to hold onto something that they cannot hold onto, then that person would perish right now. Let it go. Let go of that grudge, let go of that hatred. If you don't let go, you can never forgive. Jesus said, forgive each other 70 times 7 – endlessly. Sometimes you're worried about your children, you must even let that go. I've experienced that in my own children, I had a moment of strong uncertainty about their future. I remember I said, "I leave them in Your hands". Let go and surrender to the greater power of God who brings wonderful things to your life. Then you will find peace and see the Kingdom of God.

## **Experience the Kingdom of God**

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Very truly, I tell you can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above". When you let the spirit control your life, you can see the beauty of life, the joy of life, the freedom of life, and you'll see the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not a place nor a time, the kingdom of God is God's reign. When you completely surrender yourself to God to God's hands, that's when the kingdom of God gets established in your life. I think that's the truth that Jesus talks about. You have tremendous desire to control – just like children, so scared.

Why don't you let go? That's what it means to grow up. Let us experience how God will lead you, and that will definitely be better than what you experience. You will be able to experience tremendous joy, freedom, and vision. Life has to open up, don't close it. The Holy Spirit can burst it open so that you come out confidently. You can live out your life fully and abundantly. That what life is. Life is to be celebrated. Life is to be enjoyed. Life is to do something you truly enjoy. Life is to discover God's amazing plan for all of you.

# Life with God

June 14, 2015

Mark 4:34-36

## Kingdom of God

How wonderful it is for us to come together once a week and reflect upon our lives through the teaching of Jesus Christ. I think that is a tremendous blessing that God has given to us because during the week it is pretty hard to really reflect upon our lives. We are busy doing many things. At least we are forced to come to reflect and think about it when we gather once a week like this. I think it is pretty healthy spiritually and psychologically to truly reflect upon what is going on in my life and what is going on in my inner self. I think that's pretty important for us to do that and I do believe that and have confidence that Jesus has a very good teaching and very good wisdom and truth to really apply that to our lives and I think we will be very much that we will be very much blessed by the teaching of Jesus Christ. Today Jesus told us what the Kingdom of God is like, and then this is what he said about the Kingdom of God, "The Kingdom of God is someone who would scatter seed on the ground and it will sleep and rise night and day and the seed will sprout and grow". He does not know that is the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God. I want you to reflect upon it a little bit this afternoon. What does it mean to really understand the teaching of Jesus Christ? A person without it's scattered the sea and then he came back and slept and rose again a few nights probably and then he saw the seed sprout and grew, but he doesn't know how. What message does it have for the kingdom of God? First of all, what is the Kingdom of God?

The Kingdom of God is not a visible kingdom, it's not a structure, it's not a country, it's not a system it's not something that is tangible. What is the Kingdom of God? Let me simply say that the Kingdom of God is life with God, that's what the Kingdom of God is, basically the kingdom of God, his reign of God reigns in your life. And then that is the Kingdom of God. But God is the sole of control, controlling your life, and then that is a kingdom of God. So, the Kingdom of God is life with God. So, Jesus is talking about our life and our life is with God. That's what the Kingdom of God. Today Jesus is talking about our life somehow this is the passage that gives me

peace. I was thinking, why? This passage gives me a peace, probably that phrase, "Sleep and rise". You spread a seed and go to sleep, night and day and the seed will sprout and grow. We don't live like that, we work hard, but many times I feel that working hard is not enough. Many times, I feel that especially the nature of work that I do as a ministry, working with people endless, so I work hard, but working hard is never, I feel enough. Don't you feel that many times, you work hard, but working hard is not enough? We worry about the result, we always worry about the result. But you know the results are not necessarily always good. Even though you work hard, the result is not guaranteed to be good. What will happen to my children? What will happen to my job or what will happen to my health? and what will happen to my future? Will my future be good if I really work hard now?

## **The Future**

We constantly worry about the results and sometimes that affects our present life. We can't even work hard and focus on our present because we worry about results and we seek ourselves if the result is not going to be while we work hard. If I put so much energy and passion and that turns out to be bad, I mean why work so hard? If there's a guarantee, then I will work hard, but if there's no guarantee why work hard? Human beings are very smart. They calculate all the times and then we work hard but say you don't see the results and if you don't see the future then that affects our present life. In that sense, life can be tiring. Not only do we work hard, but you also worry about your precarious future. Maybe that's why we cannot go all the way because of this reservation. Maybe because of this fear about the future, because of this worry about the future. Maybe in the present, we cannot go all the way because it will be disappointing.

Jesus said the Kingdom of God is different. Life with God is different. You spread a seed and sleep. In other words, you work hard and leave the future in God's hand. You spread a seed and you don't go dig the seed to see whether it's growing or not, then you kill the seed. You spread the seed and wait, sleep and rise. You can only sleep and rise when you have faith. When you don't have faith, you cannot sleep, you worry about what's going to happen to the seed, but when you have faith, you can sleep and rise and then next, what you see is seed miraculously grows and makes fruit. My friends, we don't always control the result. That's the nature of life. You don't control the future. That is the nature of life.

God will use our hard work and God will bring results. Our future is not in our hands. Our future is in God's hands. In the prison, I can work hard, but our future is not in our hands, it is in God's hands. All the believers have this philosophy that they knew that their future is not in their hands, their future is in God's hands. Listen to what they Saint Paul had to say, "I am confident of this. I am confident that they want to get a good word among you, bringing to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. God who began this good work in you. He is the one who will bring completion, not you. It's not you bring everything to completion. It is God will bring to completion". Life with God is like that, life without God is not like that. You leave the result totally and completely in God's hands. That does not mean that you'll prepare for the future.

Of course, we will prepare for the future. Preparing for the future is spreading the seed around. But if there's no seed, where is the seed supposed to sprout and where is the seed supposed to grow? So preparing for the future is like spreading the seed, you have to prepare for the future. You have to spread the seed first, but we don't force the future. We don't manipulate the result to fit our ideas of what our futures should be, we don't manipulate it, we don't force it. When you try to do that, all kinds of bad things started happening. We work hard as much as we can and always leave the result in God's hands and then what you will see is that's how God moves. The people who always control the result that controls the future never seek God's hands, but when you leave future in God's hands, then you understand how God moves and that's who God is like. You understand God and you'll understand the will of God and you understand the movement of God and that is only possible when you have faith. When you don't have faith, you cannot see it. First of all, you cannot leave your future in God's hands, second, you cannot see how God moves. You cannot see the will of God and you cannot see who God is like. Amazing feel about having faith in leaving your future in God's hands that you can intuitively understand who truly God is like. Even if the result is not what you expected or wanted, we have to accept the results and move on. Trusting that God will ultimately bring it to completion.

## **Leave it in God's Hands**

We need radical faith in God's doing. We need radical faith in God's doing, that radical faith is a foolish fit. Sometimes we need to be a fool, don't be too smart with God. Sometimes we have to be a fool to truly trust in God's

doing. Abraham left Haran, completely trusting in God, he didn't even know where he was going. God said simply "Promise land you go" and he just left and then God says, unacceptable thing, God said, "sacrifice your son Isaac", and he even trusted that and tried to sacrifice his son. It's kind of ridiculous in a way, but in that process, he learned the truth.

Jehovah's meaning "God prepares", prepares something for our future. My friends in spiritual journey, journey to fullness, if faith is not there, there's no journey. Only two things, you work hard, and you believe, you believe, and you work hard. Even if the result is not what you expected, you still believe. As you start learning to leave results in God's hands. When you start doing that, when you started learning how to do that, leave your future God's hands. What you experience is freedom. You become totally free and then from the freedom you experience peace, you're free from anxieties and worries and you experience peace in you. Even though you're tired, that life is difficult and that all kinds of problems and that life can be messy, and all these things happened, but still there is peace in your heart when seeing your future in God's hands.

When you leave your future in God's hands, you will become much more effective and creative. You may become bold and courageous. You can try new things because you're not scared of failures. You may fail at times, but you are never a failure. As long as you are in God's hands, you are never a failure. We may fail many times, but we will never ultimately be a failure, so when you trust in God, we get better. You can be bold, courageous, creative and can even be effective. The present comes alive when you leave the future in God's hands.

That's the beauty of this, a secret in being in God. When you try to be safe all the time you lose yourself. When you leave your life in God's hands, you'll boldly move on. In the second parable, Jesus said, "the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, the smallest seed in the world, but in the end, you'll be the biggest of short". You start with being a small person, but when you trust in God, God will make you a bigger person who will bring tremendous results and people will come to you and experience freedom. I hope that you leave your future in God's hands and today live peacefully, freely and happily and work hard and do not worry about tomorrow. Your children leave it in God's hands. Your family, your job, your house, leave it in God's hands.



# Trust Completely

July 12, 2015

Mark 6:7-15

## The Crowd

You know when I look at Jesus' life, I realized that Jesus was not much interested in the crowd. Jesus was much more interested in the individuals, some are minorities, disciples. Jesus knew about mob psychology very well. He didn't take psych 101, but he knew all about a mob psychology, human psychology. He knew what the crowd is like. The crowd, they're there one day and the next day they're gone. They're crazy about you on the day and the next day they don't even look at. You know, they are very selfish and self-centered. If they like it, they swallow it. If they don't like it, they spit it out. That's what the crowd is and Jesus knew this crowd so well that he was not fooled by the crowd. He did not do things to entertain the crowd.

By doing that to be popular, he didn't do any of that. And we looked at the narcissism in modern days. Jesus was not at all narcissistic. He didn't do all these things to attract attention from the people. Look at me. I'm the savior. I'm great. I can do this. I can do that. You know, I can do this miracle and I can do this teaching Jesus was not interested in doing those things. Jesus just did whatever he had to do. So, Jesus was not really interested in the crowd and gathering the crowd, but rather Jesus was interested in small people, a small number of people who truly follow Jesus. Jesus said, "don't take anything that is so against our culture, against the grain of our culture" Our culture, the more is better, bigger is better. Faster is better. That's our culture.

## Simplicity

But Jesus said, "don't take even two pieces of clothes. Don't take money. Oh, don't take sandal, but don't take back. Just go out and do it". When you look at Jesus' life in the Bible, he was only interested in those who are sincerely desiring to follow Jesus. Not all of those people who are just mesmerized by the power that Jesus displayed. Jesus was not interested in power. Jesus was into truth and Jesus wanted to teach these disciples to exercise the same thing. So, today's story is after Jesus called 12 disciples, Jesus sent them out to do the work and these people went out and did

wonderful things. Just all kinds of miracles they could perform. They never tried that before. They never experienced them before. They simply followed Jesus and what Jesus is trying to say is “what I’m doing, you can do also if you believe in me”. Today’s story, Jesus said, “don’t take any of that” Jesus is not asking you to be poor, to live a humble living. That’s not the main point. The main point of today’s stories is that you don’t take anything, don’t depend on those things. Can’t you just depend on me? Can you just trust me? Can you just follow what I’m telling you to do? Then you can experience an amazing thing in your life. And they actually followed Jesus and then did amazing things that they never are expected to do. We have so much, so many clothes, so many shoes, so many bags and car. How do we have so many things, but somehow don’t feel powerful? You’re not empowered. We cannot do a lot of things, we always worry about tomorrow when we have so much. For people who have nothing to eat, they worry about tomorrow, but we have so much. There’s so much food in the refrigerator, but still, we worry about tomorrow.

I don’t know why when have so much, why do we worry? Look at the birds of the air. They do not fall because God takes care of them. Look at the lilies in the field they are beautiful. Not because they are beautiful, but because God made them beautiful. How much more God will take care of us, we are the children of God. We are not just flowers or birds, we are the children of God, and how much more God will take care of us, why do we worry? When we have so many things, why do we worry? I think Jesus is teaching us a very simple lifestyle. Restore the simplicity in your life. When you make your life so complicated, then you won’t experience the power of life. But when you simplify your life, take and give away all the unnecessary things and learn how to depend on me, trust me, then everything will be all right. That’s what God teaches us.

## **God’s Hands**

Faith is an abstract concept. We don’t know what faith is. We don’t know what it looks like. Faith is an abstract, so it’s easy to say that, “Oh I have faith” because nobody knows what that means. “Oh yeah I have faith”, what do you mean by that? We don’t know because it’s an abstract concept, but faith when you have real concrete faith, you give everything in God’s hands. You leave everything in God’s hands. That’s what faith is. When you trust God, you can leave everything in God’s hands and then that’s what faith looks like. If you have genuine faith, true faith, when problems occur,

instead of trying to solve it on your own, you'd leave them in God's hands. When you have challenges in front of you, instead of worrying about it, you'd leave them in God's hands. You have a big project that is coming up and are worrying about whether I can do a good job or not? you leave them in God's hands. Let say you failed or didn't do very well, you will get frustrated and disappointed. But, when you leave things to God's hands when you fail you think, "next time I try, I'll rise again." That is the attitude you will develop.

When you are able to deliver yourself in God's hands, you will be able to have the power to do it again and that's what Jesus is teaching us. When you're in a bad relationship with somebody or whatever, and then you did something wrong, of course, you have to go and apologize, "I'm sorry, I really did a bad thing", but that person doesn't forgive you? That person doesn't open up, what do you do? Do you try to manipulate? No, you do as much as you can, ask for forgiveness, and only after that, you live in God's hands so that person may change in the future. You don't manipulate people, you don't manipulate the situation. When you trust God, you don't use your own manipulative skills to correct the situation, you just simply leave everything in God's hand and that's what the power of faith is all about. Your life journey, journey to fullness. It's like this, as you live you may face challenges and difficulties and hardships and all that. Then instead of using your brain, how can I solve this problem? How can I deal with this problem? You worry about how you can come up with all these strategies and solutions and all that.

Instead of doing that, you're going to the cellar. You pray, instead of trying to come up with all the best solutions with your brain. Just leave them. You go into the cellar, you pray, and when you do that, you'll be able to see the way you will be able to see how God is moving and you see the movement of God and when you see the way you follow that way, that's what a journey's all about. Every time you do that, every time you face challenges, you face problems instead of trying to solve it with your brain, you go into prayer and then God will use your brain. Use every skill. God will use every situation that you have and then God will show you the way, and then once you see the way, you follow the way. That is what journey is all about. Let me give you an example. Jesus Christ, when he preached the Gospel, a lot of people loved this message. They were mesmerized by his message so that they follow Jesus, but Jesus knew that these people will reject me.

Now they follow me, but soon they will reject me. If they don't get what I want, then they don't deserve me. I'm in deaths. What they actually did, but Jesus already knew, so he did miracles and all that. Not to get popular but to help them out because he had compassion. He helped out a lot. After that, when they persecuted him, they said all kinds of false rumors in the center and then accused him that Jesus did not manipulate the situation. Jesus just lets them be because Jesus trusted the Sensationalism, God's work will never be done. He just led them all the way to the cross. He was misunderstood. And yet he did not try to correct their misunderstandings. He just let them be. He left all that in God's hands and took up the cross. And ultimately that cross brought the victory.

## Trust God

Jesus did not use manipulation. He trusted God in everything he did in our lives. When we are able to trust God in everything we do, your life will be empowered. You will experience new power. Right now, we have too many things and we depend on that and we think we have power, no, rather, we lost the power to live a powerful life. But if you learn to trust in God, then you will experience the power. Everything will work out in life and I thank God. But in the process, are you going to perish because you don't believe? I hope that you believe in God. God will work everything for Good in the end. Don't give up. Trust God and believe in God and let God take control of your life. Many times, we try to take control of our lives and we lose confidence. We worry until we give up. We run away. We can never face challenges with that kind of attitude, but when you trust God, you can face the challenges because you believe that God will empower you. God gives you the wisdom. God will give you the strength and God will give you the solution. Life secret is very simple, give away, give away, and just simply trust in God. Give away your life in God's hands.

Many young people don't fall into narcissism. God can never use you if you are in narcissism. If you're self-centered, if you had been living in your own power, God can never use you. Trust God and trust in God's power. Then you will rise with God's power. So, whatever you do in your life do not worry, don't be scared, go, but with faith, you have to trust in God and go when you don't have anything. Don't worry. God will provide what you need. What is important is what is my dream? What is my desire? What do I want to do with my life? That's what's important. When you have that, God will give you the strength. God will give you the resources and God will give

you the wisdom to be able to achieve what God wants you to achieve in your life.

In life, we don't need great sophisticated strategies and model in doing ministry. That's not what we need in life. What we need is simple faith, simple faith in God. That's what we need. That's what Jesus taught them. The first thing Jesus taught the disciples was to simply have faith. Just give away everything else but hold onto simple faith. Then you'll be able to perform all kinds of powerful things that you never experienced before and that's what we need, and I hope that you hold on to the power of love in your life.

# God is Sailing behind Us

August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015

Genesis 32:22-31

## **Struggle, Fight for Your Life**

Jacob was a man of struggle as you know, nothing came to him easily. Everything. He had to fight for it, for the birthright he had to fight for it. For the blessings of his father, he had to fight for it, for his wife he had to fight for it. For seven years he worked so hard to get a life that he wanted, and it was the wrong life the father gave him, so he had to work another seven years. I don't know how that happened, In the morning he woke up and it was not the wife that he wanted. So, he had to work for another seven years to get everything he wanted, he had to fight for it. You know, there are people like, that who always have to fight for their lives, nothing comes to them easily. Life doesn't come on a silver platter.

Today's story is just a perfect representation of Jacob. Jacob, even for Gospel blessings. He wrestled all night and he said, "I will not let you go. I will not let you go until you bless me.". So, he wrestled, even wrestled with God. Faith did not come so easily. "Oh, now I believe in God.". You know, all kinds of the spiritual things it didn't come easily. He had to fight for it. He wrestled with his life, even for Gospel blessings, he had to fight. So, as I said, nothing came to him easily. Life did not come on silver platter for Jacob. The interesting thing is, you know, I really liked Jacob, but Jacob is not the greatest guy. I mean Jacob does not have the greatest personality. He deceived people and all that, at the same time I liked Jacob in a way because he's so much like us. He had to fight for his life so much, but he never complained about his life. He never blames anyone, he could blame many people, but he never blamed anyone for his misery. That's the sign of a strong person, you know, weak people always complain. Weak people they always have finger pointed at somebody else. They always blame other people for their misfortune, but Jacob was a strong man. Jacob never blamed or complain about his life, he had no time to blame others. Jacob helped, he had to deal with his situation. He was a hardworking, man. He didn't easily give up in any situations, he was a fighter. Doesn't matter what situation he may be thrown into their he never accepted that as a given reality and just sat on it. He always fought to overcome whatever situation

he had. He was a strong man. Even Laban, his uncle who was quite cunning, could not handle Jacob. Laban is the one who gave the older sister to him first right? So, his wife's father, he was a very cunning man, but even cunning Laban cannot overcome Jacob, could not handle Jacob. Jacob lived his life as though there is no other life.

## **Don't Complain**

My friends, there is no other life, this is the only life we have. Let us not complain about life, It's no use. Let us not blame other people for the difficulties we experienced it's no use. That is what we people do. We are not that weak. We are with strong with Christ. We can handle our situations, we can deal with our situations instead of sitting down and complaining and blaming. Let us figure out what to do. Whatever difficulties we may have with our lives. Life is full of struggles for everyone, not just a few, for everyone. Life is a struggle. We all struggle with different issues. Some people struggle with their financial situations. Some people struggle with their career picks, nothing really opens up for them. Some people struggle with health issues and also some people struggle because they have such bad relationships with their parents, with their children, with other people, or some people struggle because of their children. Life can never be peaceful. That's what I experienced after many years of living, I realize that life can never be peaceful consistently. Always things happen. Things that you never expected happened. There is always a storm. We cannot live our lives running away from the storm, don't do that. We cannot avoid our own storms. We have to build character to sail through the storm. Only people who build character can sail through the storms.

During my holiday I went to Boston to visit Grace. Oh, they have a done so well to really make us comfortable. So, we drove down to New York together and then Chris was busy looking for music for us to listen to, so seventies and eighties. So, and then they turned on this music "bridge over troubled water." Do you know that song? By Simon and Garfunkel. Very famous song, one of my favourite songs, I played it and I didn't realize that even Elvis Presley sang that song before he died. We're searching through the web and then the background of this song and the words are really nice. I listened to it again and the Words are really nice. So, I wanted to share with you, the words; "When you're weary- ", I won't sing it so don't worry. "Feeling small when tears in your eyes. I drive them all. I'm on your side. Oh, when times get rough and friends just cannot be found like a bridge

over troubled water. I'll lay me down like a bridge over troubled water." I'll lay me down... beautiful song, isn't it? What a nice song. And then Simon was requested to write another verse. He came to the studio and a right there, he wrote another verse, and that verse was this one "sail on silver girl sail on by, your time has come to shy. All your dreams are on their way. See how they shine? Oh, if you need a friend, I'm sailing right behind like a bridge over troubled water. I'll ease your mind like a bridge over troubled water. I'll ease your mind."

## **Don't Give Up**

The reason Jacob could sail through the storm was that he had this experience when he was young, he had a problem with Esau because of the birthright, he deceived him, cheated on him. So, he had to run away from his home. He was probably a teenager young. He was almost got kicked out of his home, he had to run away for his life, and he came to a place called Bethel, and during a lonely night all by himself. Young man. I mean, he was kind of a mother boy, he always, always in the kitchen with mother, but now he was all by himself. His mother wasn't around. His father wasn't around, nobody was around. He was there in the wilderness in Bethel. He fell asleep, while he was sleeping he heard this in his dream and this is what God told Jacob, "know that I am with you and we'll keep you wherever you go, and we'll bring you back to this land for I will not leave you, until I have done what I have promised to you." That word clearly came to Jacob In his dream. He never forgot these words in his life. You know, there is certain experience in your life that you never forget in your life, certain experiences with God. Some spiritual experience that you have had will never disappear from you. I have one of those experience too in my dream and whenever I had a difficult time I remember that dream. Jacob always remembers those words that he had in that dream, he clearly heard that in his dream. He knew that when he sailed through, the storm, God was sailing right behind.

He knew that that was why he didn't give up. He could give up, but he knew that God was sailing right behind him. Life struggles, but we don't give up because God is sailing right behind us and we can sail through the troubled water. My friends, even high school's friends, you will face, it's not that you may face, you will face storms in your life. You will face difficulties in your life, but never forget that God is sailing right behind you, and you will sail through the storm, and Jacob became the foundation of Israel. In today's



story, Jacob becomes Israel and Jacob's 12 children became 12 tribes of Israel so that actual Israel began with Jacob. He trusted in God, he held on to God, and he remembered God promise and his sail through the storm and he became the foundation. I hope that your life becomes a foundation for a lot of other people too.

# Being Free from Yourself

August 30, 2015

Galatians 2:20

## He Who Lives in Me

Today's passage shows the core of Christian belief and it describes Christian life. What Christian life is all about and how we live as a Christian. In modern times, there's a really blurry line between being Christian and non-Christian. Some people think that being a moralist is being a Christian. Or doing well in society is what it means to be Christian. There are very confusing messages all around, but particularly when it comes to what it means to live as a Christian.

St. Paul summarized in one verse what Christian life is all about. "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh. I live by the faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." Probably we are familiar with this verse. Now I want you to reflect on it. You know those words in words, but what does that mean without using doctrine. What does that mean? What does it mean that it is no longer I who lives in me? It is no longer I who lives in me? What does it mean that the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me? What does it mean that Jesus Christ lives in me? All these things sound good and okay, but we don't really understand the implication of what that means is. I mean, when you look at it, I didn't really put the red mark, but you see "I, me" six times in one small passage. Six times he talks about me, I. Who am I? Who am I? Am I happy and satisfied? I mean, as a Christian you're supposed to be happy and satisfied. So, because I go to church and I'm a Christian, I'm supposed to be happy and satisfied, but are we? Am I happy and satisfied? Am I free and living a fulfilling life?

Last Wednesday, I was pretty disturbed. I have this new alert from a New York Times, so every morning I get a news. In the morning and in the evening, I read it every day. And then this time I came to an article that said two reporters were killed during the interview. I looked at the time and it was just two hours before I read that article. I was disturbed. The whole day I followed the development of the story to see who did this, who did this

horrible thing. And the first thing that came to my mind is that it was another gun. Oh, I hate guns. I said to myself, I mean, you see news scene interviews every day. That's what you see when you turn on the TV. It's a very common thing that people do. They were not in a war zone. They were not in a dangerous place. They will in a local town, a very safe place, and this horrible thing happened right in front of your eyes. I got so disturbed. Why?

People get killed in the movie theater. People get killed in the train. People even get killed when they have a Bible study. This killer was right there for one hour participating in the Bible study and then killed them all. Does it make sense? Does this world make sense? What is this world coming to? I mean, we are talking about being successful. Oh, the world society is progressing and then development and other kinds of things... while people's souls are dying. The spirit of the people is dying, and we talk about all the progress. Are we progressing or regressing? In what way are we progressing? The incident shows the disease of the modern people. I see people who are imprisoned – not in prison, not under the dictatorial government – but in themselves. People become more and more prisoners in themselves.

## **You Might Not Know It But...**

The suspected murderer said that he had been like a human powder keg for a while. Just waiting go boom, and he did. He said, "I am angry." He was imprisoned in his own anger. I was questioning, what is freedom? What is freedom? When we think about freedom, the first thing that comes to my mind and people's minds is to do whatever you like. Without being restricted by anything or by anyone, do whatever you like. Yes, that is freedom. In some parts of the world, women, even though they want to study, they cannot study just simply because they're a woman. When they tried to study they get shot. They cannot do whatever they like. In some parts of the world, they cannot worship like you do right now. You freely came to worship God, but in some parts of the world, they cannot worship God freely. They cannot do whatever they like, so doing whatever you like, yes, that is freedom and we enjoy that freedom in this country. I thank God that we enjoy the freedom.

Even if we have all the freedom to do whatever you like, when you are imprisoning yourself, you cannot have true freedom. Even though you do

whatever you like, if you are imprisoning yourself, how can you have freedom? We forget that sometimes we are the biggest problem. We imprison ourselves. We are imprisoned in our own problems, in our own anger, in our own insecurity, in our own selves. We are imprisoned. That was what St. Paul discovered. He didn't know, but he was imprisoned. Of course, he was not enslaved by anger like the murderer. St. Paul did not even know that he was enslaved by himself. He thought that he was living a good, righteous life. Then one day he realized that the righteous life that he lived, that itself is the greatest power to imprison him, his own righteousness became my own prisoner.

During Jesus' time, that's what the Pharisees did. They were righteous. They were great. "Yeah. I'm better than you!". That kind of attitude, and then they were actually imprisoned in their own righteousness. They were the ones who killed the Son of God, and St. Paul was doing the same thing. He was on the way to Damascus. He was imprisoned in his own righteousness. "Those people, I have to kill them." He was imprisoned that he was on the way to do that, and then he realized he met Christ. He realized that his own righteousness was imprisoning him, enslaving him. It was a very sophisticated understanding. He was a righteous man, but he realized that his own righteousness had enslaved him.

## **Stuck in Bondage**

There are many things within us that enslave us. We ourselves sometimes are the worst enemies when it comes to having true freedom. Some people live in their anger, just a little thing triggers them. They get so angry. Some people are imprisoned in their greed, "Oh, I have to be better than you. I have to have more than you. I have to excel. Nobody can beat me." Some people live in imprisonment of selfishness insecurity, pride, ignorance and false religiosity. The righteousness that comes from your own efforts, our own darkness, sometimes we are imprisoned in our own boredom. Life is boring. I don't know what to do. These things enslave us.

With all these things going on in me, how can I have true freedom? How can I have true happiness and satisfaction? How can I experience the fullness of life when these things are going on within me? I don't even know that I'm imprisoned. When we are enslaved by ourselves, where do we escape? When a country enslaves me, I can run away from the country and go to another country. That's what's happening in lot of places; Syria,

Afghanistan, all of these people go to a European country to run away from that enslavement. So many people get killed, just in the last few days, many hundreds of people just got killed in the process of that dangerous journey.

St. Paul found this solution. He said, in today's passage, "It is no longer I who live in me." Before he was the most important thing and he was the boss and he was the main actor of his life. Everything was about him. Salvation was about him, righteousness was about him, everything was about him. He was at the center of everything. He was at the center of the universe. But after meeting Christ, he realized that he did not have to think about himself all the time. "Life is not just all about me," he realized. He did not have to be the center of everything. He could let himself go. He didn't have to control his life. It is true freedom not to have to think about yourself all the time. That's true freedom. That is true salvation.

## **Break Your Chains**

I read somewhere in a book, it says, "When the shoes fit you, you don't have to think about your feet. When your belt fits you. You don't have to think about your waist. When everything is in harmony, you don't have to think about yourself." It is true. When you're in harmony with yourself, you don't need to think about yourself. When you have lot of problems with yourself, you always think about yourself. You have a lot of insecurities. You always have to think about yourself. When you have a lot of pride, you'll need to always think about yourself, but when you're in harmony with everything, then you don't need to think about yourself. That is true freedom from yourself. The real salvation is not to pay attention to yourself, but to completely forget about yourself.

When we can completely forget about ourselves, we can live a much more meaningful life. The tube of flute has to be hollow to make the beautiful sound, the canvas has to be empty so that beautiful art can be created. That was the truth. Jesus taught us and St. Paul expressed it in this way. "This is Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness". Jesus displayed his most beautiful self by emptying himself. Oh my goodness, what a truth. Don't be fooled by untruth. Be inspired by the truth. Jesus displayed his most beautiful self by emptying himself, not showing off himself. He said, "If you try to save

yourself, you will lose it, but if you lose yourself for the sake of the Gospel, you will find it.” How much truer can it get? Don’t be fooled by the philosophy of this world; “Promote yourself. Be the celebrity. Be famous. These successful, be loved by people.” The more you think about yourself, the smaller you become.

There is a funny story about a Rabbi. There was a rabbi who was seriously ill, and his disciples came to visit him. Beside his bed, they were talking among themselves about how great the Rabbi was. One of them said there was not a single person as wise as him since the day of Solomon. The other said his faith was like Abraham’s faith. And another one said he was so intimate with God that he was like Moses. He could face God. He could meet God face to face. He was just a wonderful man. While they were talking all about great things about this Rabbi, the Rabbi looks disturbed. After they had all gone, the wife asked Rabbi, did you hear all the praise that they made? He replied “Yes.” “How come you look disturbed?” And he said, “No one mentioned anything about my humility.” The more you empty yourself, the more you will become full. The more you empty yourself, the more freedom you’ll enjoy. Let us reflect on St. Paul’s words once more... “And it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

What we need to meditate on every day is not ourselves. It is about the love of Jesus Christ. That is something that we need to meditate on every day. Then you will become free from the fear of yourself, fear of failure, fear of rejection and fear of non-existence. I told KSM members because they are closer to the end of their lives, “If you think about yourself so much and if you are attaching yourself so much, how can you die? How can you let yourself go when death comes to you? You’re wonderful. You don’t need to think about yourself all the time. You’re wonderful as it is. You’re beautiful as you are.” So, enjoy your life. Celebrate your life. Always be thankful for the love of Jesus Christ who loves you so much.

# Why Wait?

December 6, 2015

Isaiah 40:27-31

## Waiting

Christian faith is about waiting. When you look at a Christian story, a lot of stories about waiting, and Christmas is also about waiting. Children are waiting for their gifts. I like to reflect on waiting today. There are some people also around us, waiting for their healing, waiting for a better financial future. So, we all wait for different things. We don't like waiting that much. People don't like waiting. We think waiting is a waste of time. We think that by waiting, there is nothing good comes out of waiting. It's just pure waste. Waiting is very much part of our reality. We always have to wait, it's part of our life, especially in the modern world. Every morning, we have to wait. We get stuck in traffic, then we have to wait. At the grocery we have to wait in line.

Waiting is a part of our reality, it is an unavoidable reality. So, don't get stressed out when you have to wait. Otherwise you'll be consumed with impatience and frustration. To survive the modern world, we have to learn to how to wait, how to live with waiting. But you know what, we are living in a very fast paced society. We have created technology so that we don't have to wait. We even created a drone to deliver pizza, and then everything that you order from Amazon will get to you maybe next day or within two hours. We have created technology so that we can kill waiting. Before it took a few days to receive mail. Now it takes a few seconds to receive mail from people we know. In Jesus' time, for Jesus to get to Jerusalem, it took one whole week, 120 kilometers. That is kind of distance that we walked for Camino this spring. It was 120 kilometer and it took exactly one week. But now, if you drive fast, maybe one hour we can get to a Niagara. So, we have reduced waiting time tremendously, but we have become more impatient. So not that we got better about our attitude towards waiting. We got worse with our attitude towards waiting.

## Waiting in the Bible

So, I was thinking, maybe a solution is not just to deal with waiting time or reduce waiting time. Maybe the solution is to change our attitude towards

waiting. Waiting is not something we have to kill at all cost. Maybe there is something good in waiting. When I look at the people in the Bible. They all waited. It is a story about waiting. For example, Jesus, he always said “My hour has not yet come.” What does that mean? He was waiting for his time. He didn’t just do anything. How about Abraham? God promised, Abraham you will be the father of great nation. He didn’t even have a son and he had to wait for the son to be a born. Also, Joseph, God gave him the dream that you be so great that a lot of people will bow to you, even including your parents.

But his life was miserable. His brothers were jealous and then they tried to kill him. Then at the end they sold him to Egypt in slavery. Then he was imprisoned in Egypt and he had to wait until his skill of dream was actually fulfilled and recognized. How about the Israelites? Israelites became Israelites through 40 years of waiting in the wilderness. The Israel was not born just like that. They had to wait 40 years to become truly the Israel. Waiting was part of their spiritual lives. So I was wondering why God led all of them to wait, instead of instantly giving them the answer or curing them. Why do they have to wait so long to be who they are? I think there’s something special about waiting. God uses waiting to discern who the true people of God are and also God uses waiting to build these people up.

## **Character Building**

And only waiting can do that. Nothing else can do that. Only waiting can build you up. There is a secret power in waiting. Waiting builds character in us and God needed that character to do his work. God cannot use just anybody, God cannot use just talented people. God uses people who are waiting, who know how to wait. That’s why God installed that waiting in part of God’s plan. Only those who are waiting for the Lord will be able to carry on the work of God. Will waiting build special muscle within us to persevere when the storms of life come? People who go through difficult times through the period of painful waiting time, they will be able to survive when they meet difficult times. They are strong. Waiting is the best way to become strong. My friends, people who easily give up can never be strong.

## **God’s Plan**

No matter how strong they may be in the beginning, no matter how talented they are, no matter how intelligent they may be. The people who give up



easily can never be strong. The only people who know how to wait, they can be strong. God will use those who know how to wait. Only those who struggle and wait will be able to stand strong in times of trial. Also, God will give these people who are waiting the strength. God will give them the strength, God's strength. This is what Isaiah said, but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, not just anybody. The people who wait for the Lord God will give them the strength and their strength will be renewed. Then they shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. In our waiting, God gives us the strength. Why are we waiting? Is it because we have no choice but wait? Is it because we don't have solution right away? Is it because situations cannot be resolved right away? That's why we wait because we cannot do anything about it. That's why we wait. Don't wait in fear.

Don't wait passively wasting away your time. Wait for the Lord, wait with hope, wait with prayer and God will give you strength and you'll become strong in the process of waiting. As I said last week, almost every week we hear tragic news. Two weeks before in Paris, terrible thing happen, and last week this man, when in the clinic and it killed three people. Just this week couple went into this place, they take care of physically challenged people. They killed 14 people and wounded many. Crazy world. I feel like people just don't know what to do with their anger and frustration. They just let it out. I don't like you, so I kill. I don't like feminist, then they go and killed them off. We are living in such a difficult world and we think sounds so feeble and people may ask, why wait? Useless. we have to fight. Waiting sounds so weak and useless. Jesus also lived in a very violent world and as a result of that violence, Jesus was killed but he never submitted to the power of darkness. He waited for God to reign, even on the cross. While he was dying, he was waiting for God's reign to come upon us for the Kingdom of God.

## Waiting with Hope

We still wait for God to reign in this world. Let us not become victims of despair. Let us wait with hope, let us wait for Gospel. We are not going to give up our dream for the world, where there is peace, justice, love and harmony. While waiting, we will continuously promote our love for humanity and wait for God to work. I'm not going to be selfish, we are not going to be selfish. We are going to continuously promote love for humanity. Last week in the midst of dark and gloomy news, I was very encouraged by the good

news. Light in the darkness. Mark Zuckerberg, the owner of Facebook and his wife Priscilla Chan. On Tuesday, they declare that they will donate 99 percent of their worth for the worthy cause. You know that asset is \$45,000,000,000, not just tithing, 10 percent, not just 90 percent, 99 percent of their asset, they'll use it for the great cause. They are not even believer's. We Christians should never lose our hope, our love for humanity. We can do that. Not everybody is selfish. Not everybody is a murderer and killers. Not everybody is a terrorist. There are people who love the humanity. As Christians, we have to stand up. Living selfishly, just for ourselves, we have to promote our love for humanity and we'll wait with hope.

Christmas is time of waiting with hope and that waiting gives us joy. In our waiting let us impregnate, hope and dream for the better world. Where people care for each other, truly care for each other, and I think we can do that. Let us impregnate that care in our waiting.

# If God is with Us

December 13, 2015

Matthew 1:18-25

## Is God with Us?

If God is with us, what will it be like? God is with us. There will be peace. If God is with us, there will be security and protection. If God is with us, a lot of good things will happen. That is our common thinking and that is a nice theory, but that is not always true. Also, the scripture doesn't say that. Jacob's life wasn't like that even though God was with him. How about Moses' last 40 years? He wanted to live in green pasture peacefully with family, but because God was with him, he had to go to the wilderness, and for 40 years he suffered much. Jesus and the disciples would have lived a very normal, happy life, but because God was with them, they left their fishing net, home, security, protection, and most of them, became martyrs at the end. It is the same with St. Paul. Their lives that are full of crisis, danger, and hardship because God was with them. Even though God is with us, we experience crisis, trouble, vulnerability, and danger.

Well, whenever people experience hardships in life, the first question they raise is whether God is with me. When things become difficult, the question people ask is, "is God there? Is, God with me?" When bad things happen to them, they sometimes even conclude that God doesn't exist, or at least he was not with me. It is hard to accept that God leads us into crisis, into trouble, and into danger. Mary's pregnancy; That was the visible sign of God being with her. Son of God was in her body. "Emmanuel". That was the visible sign of God being with Mary. However, this presence of God would lead Mary and Joseph into great trouble, crisis, and even danger. If God wasn't with them, their lives might have been better off. Joseph would have married Mary and lived happily ever after and at least they could live a normal life like everybody else. A virgin getting pregnant. It was not just a scandal. Maybe in these days, maybe it's just scandal, but in that time, it was not just a scandal. It was a crime punishable by death, capital punishment.

## God's Presence

We must realize how hard it is to impregnate God's presence. Impregnating God's presence is not an easy thing. You don't just close your eyes and "Hmmm". God's presence does not come to you. Being pregnant with God's presence is a very difficult and scary thing. Sometimes even God threw Joseph into the situation where there was no way out. Joseph thought, but he had no way out so all he could do was "Okay, I'm going to just break off this relationship." That's all he could think about it. There was no way out. God brought Joseph and Mary into great fear. "Emmanuel", God is with us because of "Emmanuel". Joseph and Mary fell into a deep dilemma. "Emmanuel" was the scandal. "Emmanuel" was the problem. You know we have certain thoughts about God, and according to our thoughts, we have certain expectations about God and we expect God to behave in the way we imagine, that's what we do with God. We want God to serve us rather than us serving God. God, I want you to behave this way because this is my idea about you, so if you don't behave in the way that I can imagine that maybe you are not God. So, we continuously create idols rather than God. The idols that I can handle, the idols that I like, the idols that I'm comfortable with, to God is not limited to all our limited imagination.

You want to hear what Isaiah said. This is what Isaiah said, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways say the Lord, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." God leads us beyond our imagination and so whenever God is with you, God always surprises you. But the funny thing is, whatever idea that we have about God, is still the same, some people still have ideas of elementary lessons that they learn about God and they continue until they die. God doesn't change. But God continuously opens you up so that your understanding of God becomes deeper. But we would choose idols rather than God because idols don't change, doesn't challenge us. It is a pseudo-god, an ideal god. But when real God is present with us, we are challenged, we are shocked, we are surprised every time. Sometimes don't you wonder, oh my goodness how can you work in that way? I could never imagine the way you worked in my life. Sometimes I get awed by the way God worked through my life. God leads us beyond our imagination. We don't want to go where God wants to take us many times because it doesn't guarantee security and safety, so we don't want to go there. What is most important to me is security and safety, and if God cannot provide that, that is not God. That's the most

important thing. That is my god, security, and safety. That's my god. Nothing and nobody else can take this away from me.

## God is with Us

Mary would have never have chosen to take the life in the way that happened to her. Mary could not even imagine how God could do that in my body. You want me to be pregnant with the son of God. That was beyond her imagination and she would've never have chosen that way willingly on her own. My friends, we never choose the hard way, we always choose the easy and comfortable way. Sometimes hard and difficult situations are just dropped before us, without my choice. It's not that I've chosen that way, but it just comes. It just gets dropped in front of me on my doorstep. Sometimes because of "Emmanuel", life becomes hard and difficult because of "Emmanuel". There are Asian shame and crisis in our lives. Sometimes without "Emmanuel", my life, me might've been better off. So, when difficulties come because of "Emanuel", don't be too discouraged. Don't lose hope. Don't be too hard on yourself. Don't blame yourself and others. As Simon announced, that group of refugees came into Canada. 25,000 people will come, and Justin Trudeau even went out to greet them. I was very proud of my own prime minister of my country. He chose the hard way, not the safe way. When everybody talks about security and safety, he chose humanity. God always challenges us. What are you going to choose in your life? Let us wait and see how "Emmanuel" turns our crisis into a new birth and new life. Into new opportunity to experience what we never experienced before.

I'm not going to be a slave to security and safety. One life I live I don't want to do that. I want to experience something wonderful, what life can offer to all of us? You're still young. What are you afraid of? Fear. Fear should never be a guiding principle. We should never feel other people to choose something. When you choose something, choose it out of love, not out of fear, do not fear for God is with us. For the new life to be born. There will always be chaos and destruction. The old has to go for the new to come. Right now, in this world, we experienced tremendous chaos and crisis and people live with fear. We choose not to live with fear. Let us pray that God may give birth to a new order in this world through this chaos and confusion, and that is something that we need to reflect on during this Christmas season. Jesus was born, but how? I hope that she just becomes born in your heart. When God is with you and Jesus is born in your heart, then you

will see something that you didn't see before. That's the message of Christmas.

# Generosity begets Generosity

January 31, 2016

2 Corinthians 9:1-15

## Worries

Jesus said not to worry about tomorrow, but it is not always easy not to worry. When life gets tough, the first thing we do is a worry. When we look at ourselves, when things don't go well, the first thing we do is a worry. Last Wednesday we had a Korean speaking ministry session meeting to prepare for the congregation meeting that was held today. It is not easy to take care of the finances of the church like Brian, the chair of Korean speaking ministry, had said. The chair of the finance committee has to worry about the finances of the church at all times, whether we have enough budget, whether we have enough income, things like that they have to continuously worry about. But Brian shared with us a very interesting experience he had with his mother.

He was worried. And then, seeing him worry about finance, his mother talked to him. She said, Lee, never worry about the finances of the church. God will take care of it. Won't God provide resources? When you try to do good work when you try to do God's work, won't God provide resources? Why do you worry? Don't you worry? God will take care of it. So, he said he learned not to worry about finance. Actually, we should not worry about anything in life, period. It is good to have a woman of faith as a mother, isn't it? We always learn from them and it doesn't matter how old you are, you always learn something from your parents. The very next day I got a phone call from LA out of nowhere. She never called me [the caller]. But I did a wedding for her {the caller} and she knows about our church. She's the second generation and she appreciate how valuable the ministry is that we're doing here at Saint Timothy. And she said she and her husband would like to tithe for our church. She said, "you're doing a valuable ministry. I too, I want to contribute to that". She had never called me for several years. I haven't seen her since. They live in LA and they wanted to do the offering for our church, it will probably be in US dollars.

Good time. I mean more than the money, It wasn't like God's teaching was that you don't worry about finance or you don't worry about my church. God

will take care of our needs and our church. God will guide us using whatever resources are out there. We just have to trust and do whatever needs to be done. I don't know whether I shared this with you at the ESM prayer retreat, but there's a church on Spadina and Harbord called Knox Spadina. It is a Presbyterian church and its part of our denomination. Actually, the first Korean Presbyterian Church started from that place, the first immigrant church, and that church rented the building and started the Presbyterian church there. That church has a beautiful story. In 1827, a generous person named Jesse Ketchum donated three acres of his land.

## Paul's Principles

There's a school in downtown called Jesse Ketchum and my son went to that school. Jesse Ketchum did a lot of good things, not only for the church, but for society, for the school, and things like that. So, he donated three acres of his land and the church still owns one acre. And do you know which land that is? It is right across Eaton Center Hudson's Bay place on Queen Street. The rental fee from that land is \$3,000,000 just from the rental. And in 2015, three family members pass away. They left a bequest which is \$140,000. So even without income from the church members, they have at least 1.5 million dollars as a budget. They do a lot of mission work and a lot of good things. People who love the church left the money for the church as they passed away. St Paul's mission wasn't just to go around to preach the gospel. One of the important missions of St Paul was to collect offering funds for the Jerusalem church and he wrote to Second Corinthians in chapter nine to teach them about the offering and let us reflect. Simply have it, to reflect on what he had taught.

This is the first thing that St Paul said: "The one who sows sparingly, will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully". The first principle is that you give. You give little, you gain little. You give a lot, you gain a lot. It's not an economic principle that Saint Paul is talking about. That's what life is like. If you think big, life becomes big. If you think small, your life becomes small. If you only think about you, life will be about you. If you think about others, then life will be for many, many people. If you just live your life benefiting yourself, then you'll benefit only yourself. But if you live your life benefiting others, then you'll be able to benefit so many people with your devotion. Like Jesse Ketchum, who powerfully gave. He gave for 200 years. The church had continued because of his generous donation. His school still exists and there are a lot



of students and children who had graduated from that school and benefited. So, if you think big, life will become big. If you think small, life will become small.

Second one: “each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”. It doesn’t really matter how much you give. It has to come from a generous heart. Concretely, you give out of your thankful heart. The offering is not the result of financial resources that you have. The offering is a result of your abundant heart. Just because you have more money, it doesn’t mean that you’ll give more. But as you experience God’s grace more, then you’ll be able to give more. The offering is directly correlated to the grace that you experience in your life. Jesus Christ gave all his life and everything that he had for us. As we experience that grace, the love of Jesus Christ, then every single thing that I have belongs to you. My talent, my time, my passion, my financial resources, all of that belongs to you.

Next one is: “God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work”. In other words, God will provide what we need for our good work. God will plentifully give. That was what the mother of the finance chairman meant. You don’t worry, God will give. God will take care of the church. So when we do good things, the resources will be there. And the next one is similar: “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.”

And the last one is: “You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity which will produce thanksgiving to God through us”. As we share in the blessings we receive, it will produce thanksgiving in some people. That was what the couple in LA did. Because of their generous donation, we are thankful for them recognizing our ministry, praying for our ministry, and supporting our ministry. We have confirmed again that this ministry is valuable and that we are doing something very valuable. There are a lot of people who live their lives benefiting others and those people will be thankful someday. We just talked about the orphanage in Korea. Yesterday I had a session meeting and Barbara is working really working hard going around interviewing different people and helping out orphans in Korea. Whatever she does will benefit many people. Your life, your

donation, your gift will produce Thanksgiving somewhere in some people. Saint Paul understood the beauty of the lifestyle of giving – giving is a lifestyle.

## **Lifestyle**

We have to cultivate the lifestyle of giving and that is our philosophy. Whatever we have, we share to benefit others. That is a life philosophy. We don't live for ourselves. As Jesus lived for us and lived for God, we live for others and we live for God. Generosity begets generosity. Generosity begets abundance and not just material abundance. It means the abundance in life, a life of thanksgiving and a life of gratitude. One very interesting characteristic of people who give is that they're always thankful. They're always happy by giving their gifts to others. They become happy and thanksgiving and gratitude become part of their lives. My friends, we are indebted people.

Basically, we are all indebted people. All the joy we enjoy and all the happiness we live with comes from God and comes from other people. You could not have done it on our own. Last Thursday I had dinner with the KSM members and a man had told me, "Reverend, if there were no church, then my immigrant life would have been so difficult. I don't think I could have survived. How important this community is! We become friends and we have people to talk to. We pray together. We worship together. This is wonderful that we have this kind of church". There's an African saying: "because you are, I am". That's a wise thing to think "because you are, I am".

If you aren't there, then I am not here. Because you are, I am. Because God is, I am. We owe all our happiness to God and to others and I'm very thankful to you for your generous donations and gifts and what you do for this community. Because of you, we can all enjoy life's happiness, laughter, and joy. I thank God for this community, and this community is very unique and very special and that's what I believe. That's why I gave my whole youth to this community. I came here when I was 34, so all my thirties, all my forties, all my fifties. That's my prime time!

I gave all of them to this community because I do believe that this community is unique and special. If I can at least make one decent spiritual

community, then I'm very happy. I'm very happy about that. Our children will be able to drink fresh water from the fountain of this special, beautiful, precious community. Generosity is our statement that we cannot have made a life alone. Generosity is the expression of our gratitude to God and to all others, for walking along with us to build a life together. Generosity is our belief and our philosophy that life's good is to be shared with others. The true blessing is to live a life of giving. That's a blessing. If you live a life of giving you are a blessed person, the blessing is not to receive. The blessing is to give from the life of giving. Thanksgiving comes from the life of giving. Compassion comes from the life of giving. Joy comes in from the life of giving. Deep satisfaction comes from the life of giving.

## **Reflection**

We are made not to have our hunger filled by trying to fill it. This is a misunderstanding. You can never fill your hunger by trying to fill it, you'll become hungrier. The more you try to have, the hungrier you will become, but the more you try to give, you realize that you don't need much. You realize that you already have it. We already have everything we need. Whatever we have is an extra bonus. Those things, if we have it we are thankful. If we don't have it, we are fine. We already have everything that we need. Life is made that way. Jesus taught us, you can only fill your hunger by emptying yourself by giving. That's Jesus' philosophy. You empty yourself. Then God will fill it. As we get to know God, we realize how much we have received and from that realization, true sharing can come.

# Power to Press On

March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Philippians 3:10-12

## **Press On**

Happy Easter! Resurrection, that's a difficult topic. Knowing resurrection is not like a knowing a computer or knowing forgiveness, resurrection, it's hard to talk about it, no one can explain it. Maybe something that you cannot understand by explanation or visual presentation, we can never do that. Even the early Christians had difficult time explaining the resurrection, even those who experienced the resurrection had difficult time explaining that resurrection to others. First of all, the disciples met the risen Christ- Some of the disciples, but Thomas did not happen to be there. So, the they tried explained to Thomas about The resurrection of Jesus Christ, but the failed they couldn't do that, doesn't matter what the they tried.

## **Seeing to Believe**

They couldn't really explain resurrection to Thomas. And this is what Thomas said, "unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe". Unless I see it, unless I touch it, I will not be believing it, the disciples cannot really let him see it or touch it or anything like that, but next week when the risen Christ came to Thomas, he didn't need any of what he demanded. Somehow, he's not just seeing the risen Christ. It is somehow that resurrection event happened, and he believed, and he made the highest confession, that is "my lord and my God" in the Gospel nobody said. Nobody said Jesus was God, they were at most able to say Jesus was the son of God. Nobody was able to say Jesus was God. But Thomas was only the first one who said, my Lord and my god.

## **Acceptance of Belief Without Physical Sight**

So, the early Christians had a difficult time explaining the resurrection and understanding the resurrection. For example, when the risen Christ came to Mary, Mary with fiscal eyes, she saw the risen Christ, but she didn't realize that that was Christ Jesus, she didn't even know. Another instance, two disciples were on the road to an amass and they were talking with the

risen Christ. Jesus was risen, and they were talking with him, but all the way to the end they were talking but didn't know that it was Jesus who was risen. So, the early Christians had difficult time explaining resurrection. So, we realized that resurrection is not to be understood by seeing it, touching it, explaining it, or proving it, then I realized that maybe the resurrection is a bigger reality than what we can explain by touching it, seeing it or feeling it, is much, much bigger reality.

when you're not able to explain it, prove it, show it, how can we accept the resurrection? That's a big question to all of us. How can we accept the resurrection? And I realized that we don't see the resurrection, but we see the power of resurrection. You don't see the wind, but we see the power of the wind, so we don't see the resurrection. We thought, but we see the power of resurrection. Then what is the power of Resurrection? I believe that it is hope. When the power of resurrection is crystallized, that is hope. Within you, you have hope, and that is a crystallization of the power of resurrection. Hope is not something that you can see because hope is something that has not happened yet, so you have hope for something which has not happened yet, so it is hard. You cannot really see, so you don't hope for what you see. This is what Saint Paul said eloquently about hope "for in whole, we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope for who hopes for what is seen, but if we hope for what we do not see we wait for it with patience." So, hope is not for what you don't see, I mean that's the nature of hope. If you have a hope for tomorrow, you don't see it tomorrow yet, so you hope for what you do not see, but amazing thing about hope is that hope makes you what you cannot see, see, somehow that's what hooked us. hope makes you see what you cannot see.

## **Hope Carries On**

when you suffer from illness, you don't see healing. When you suffer from injustice, you don't see justice. When you suffer from bondage, you don't see freedom. You don't see that, but you hope for what you don't see, but then when you have hope, you start seeing healing justice and freedom. That's why we fight for our illness, injustice around us and bondage that binds us because we see healing. we see justice and we see freedom. It is hope within us, and our hope will not be in vain. Our hope comes true as Jesus rose from the dead, and will also rise from the ashes, that was a secret of the early Christians I realized, because disciples, when they were around Jesus, they were totally helpless and hopeless and incapable, they

didn't have faith. They were doubtful all the times. They always made mistakes they weren't able to carry on. So many people might have expected that with the death of Jesus, the movement of Jesus will die too. With the death of Jesus, the purpose of Jesus will die too because the disciples would not be able to carry on. That's what people thought, but somehow that was not the case. Somehow our history tells us that Christianity survived, that. The early disciples carried on, moved on, and even 2000 years later, here we are talking about Jesus movement. They went through so much a persecution in difficulties, even more persecution when they were with Jesus and now without Jesus, they were able to go through the storm because they had hope. They were able to fight through the threat and crisis, because there was something within them, and that something within them was hope, hope for the Kingdom of God. Hope for the better world, they had that hope and that hope carried them. That's why Christianity was able to survive. He's a very small movement. Few people at the most, few hundred people in the beginning and they were able to carry on. That is a power of resurrection.

## **Press On, don't let Belief Die**

Today we read words from St Paul. This is what he said. I want to read it again for you. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. I want to know it. I want to know the power of Resurrection, and he said, "and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death. If somehow, I may attain the resurrection from the dead, not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus happened, and has made me". So here, very clear picture, He wants to know the power of resurrection and then he will have hope and that hope will carry him so that he could press on. Paul knew the power of resurrection, he didn't see the resurrection, but he saw the power of Resurrection, he has strong hope and that was why he could press on, my friends. You won't see the body of resurrected Christ. Even if you see him in your dream, it won't help you much because the resurrection, the resurrection cannot become real by what you see. But as you believe in God, the power of resurrection impregnated.

When you believe in God, the power of resurrection will be impregnated, and the hope will be impregnated and then hope will start moving within you like a baby moving in your body. For those who are pregnant, they experienced, they know what it means to have baby moving in their tummy

in the same way, the hope moves within you, the power of resurrection is not what you achieve, the scripture never says that Jesus rose from the dead by himself. No. Jesus did nothing about resurrection. Jesus did nothing he just died. And the scripture says, God raised him from the dead. Jesus only had hope, but God raised him from the dead using the hope that Jesus had with him. The power of resurrection is not what you accumulate within you. The power of resurrection is not something that you can get from the world. The power of resurrection is what God gives you, when you trust in God. Harvey Cox, a professor at Harvard University. He wrote many famous books like secular city and so on, and he said this “when I was in prison during civil rights movement, young black men or captured with me and in the neighborhood cell, when Harvey heard the young black men crying out, singing, we shall overcome. That was when I was most cruelly sure about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” When we heard that shouting, screaming and singing, we shall overcome. That’s when he was sure about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Resurrection is not somewhere out there. Resurrection is right here. I’m allowed to sing with us. We are living in a very sad world. Just last week you heard about the bombing in Belgium. We are living in the world of greed, violence, inequality, anger, apathy and meaninglessness, all kinds of discriminations and prejudice. We can easily be victims of the world around us but let us not leave ourselves powerless victims of this world. You are better than that. I hope that you don’t just become powerless, meaningless victim of this world. If you only think about your own survival, in my opinion, as a victim, that’s a victim mentality. If you only think about yourself, in my opinion, that’s a victim. The people who have hope in them, they will press on to make justice, to make this world better a world, and God will let the power of resurrection work within them. It is not what I do. It is what God does. The power of resurrection makes us living, makes us live a meaningful life, not just for myself, for the others around us.

# Good Life

May 15, 2016

Micah 6:6-8

## What Makes A Good Life?

Good life. That is something that we need to pursue. You deserve it. You're supposed to live a good life. I mean, we have one life we live. We've got to live a good life, so you need to pursue it, and you deserve it, and you have a right to do so. And God very much wants you to have good life.

At the staff meeting, I told the staff that this week's sermon title is 'good life' and Reverend Sohn said, "it sounds like Good Life fitness." That's the first image that comes to your mind. And I told him that was exactly why I chose that title. Good life. I think that Good Life fitness has captured very well what modern people understand what they think about a good life. When people think about good life, they think about a healthy and active life.

We are obsessed with what we eat, and we are very careful about what we eat. It's not just older people these days who are eating healthy food, but a lot of young people are. It's a trend, a lot of young people are into healthy food – it's much more expensive, but they don't mind paying more money for buying expensive food because, you know, "eat better, feel better." And so, they have all kinds of theories. Some stores who sell expensive organic food, they do very well. Not just tasty food, but healthy food. People choose to live a healthy life, and food is very important. A lot of health problems come from eating unhealthy food. We are eating and consuming way too much bad food.

I mean, ramen at night is like heaven, but it's not necessarily good for your body. In an elevator on the way down from the exercise room, I happened to listen to these two young Korean men talking. I wasn't intentionally listening to them, but they didn't know that I was Korean, so they were speaking Korean to each other and I just had happened to listen to their conversation. They were talking about body building and they were giving tips to each other. I was quite surprised at how hard they exercise. When I go up there, I run on the treadmill and I say, "Wow, I did so much" and I look at my time – only 20 minutes at most. These guys are staying there



three, four hours for their body. They workout religiously. It is good to exercise... healthy body, healthy mind. It is good to work hard, eat sensibly exercise regularly, and enjoy your life doing things that you enjoy. That's how we define a good life and that's how I'd like to define a good life too. You've got to work hard, you've got to exercise, you've got to eat healthy food and you've got to enjoy whatever you really enjoy doing and that's what I try to do too.

But when I look at those things, what I just described is all about external things. Food, exercise, work, and doing things you enjoy. These are things that we do on the outside, but how about the inside? Also, all of these things are about me. It is all about me, and a good life cannot just be all about me. A good life is more than that. A good life is deeper than that... It's not just about me.

## **The Three Pillars**

In today's scripture, people came to God actually complaining. Sometimes we use this passage during Christmas time. You may think that, like a devotional to God, "What do you require of me?" That's how some songs are written and all that, but that's mistaken. Here, the people came to God complaining because God was not very pleased with the Israelites at that time. Because they were very selfish, they were only thinking about themselves, and God was not happy with them. So, the prophets rebuked the people, and people responded to God. They said, "What do you want, God? Do you want burnt offerings with calves a year old? Or do you want thousands of rams? No, or do you want ten thousand of rivers of oil? If that is enough, then God, shall I give my first born for my sin? Then you'll be satisfied? What do you want?" That's what they were saying. It wasn't like, "God, what do you require?" like a devotional response. They were angry at God.

So, there was a sarcastic tone in their response to God, and God said to them, "Oh, mortal, what is good?" It sounded like to me, "What is a good life?" God is saying, a good life is to the justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God. I want you to remember these three things. (Can you put it up please?) Act justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly. These are pillars of a good life. Doing justice is to do with morality, but morality is often viewed as a personal thing, personal morality. Doing justice is to do with not you, but with other people and the earth we live in.

## Do Justice

We are doing a terrible injustice to our environment. We need to do something about it. We are abusing the earth, resources, the land... everything that you know about the environment, we are just abusing it. We need to do something about it. I'd like to do something even from our church too. You know, it is difficult to do it at church because at home you're always there, so you can be conscious of it and you can separate all that. But in church you come once a week and then doing all that is difficult. But if you automatically assume that somebody will do it, it will never be done. It's hard. So, if you chip in a little bit more of your time taking care of the garbage and all that, then we can do it together. And I hope that someday we can do this environmental stuff at our church. Once, we wanted to get rid of styrofoam cups. So that's why we actually bought the dishwasher, a heavy duty industrial dishwasher in the kitchen. We and everybody brought mugs and all that. So, I hope that we can do something to help out with the environment.

But it's not only the environment that is abused. People are abused. Especially people who don't have power, privilege and resources. The poor people, people of different colors, different opinions. They have been abused and mistreated badly. Maybe read the book by Ta-Nehisi, 'Between the World and Me'. He really, clearly speaks out about how black people are being treated in the United States. That's that right. Simply not right. Doing justice is doing what is right. You don't treat people like that. It doesn't matter who they are, what they may have. What morality, what orientation, whatever that is, you don't treat people that way. That is not the right thing to do.

Jesus was not so harsh on personal moral failure, but he was very, very strong and harsh on those who abused people because they didn't have power. We have to be very conscious of justice all the time. You always have to be conscious of people who are treated unfairly. Poor people, powerless people, and we should stand up for them. Living with a sense of justice is what a good life is all about. And we should use our resources to help out with injustice going on around us. Last Friday at the Bible study, I asked them, "What is the difference between abundance from God and abundance that you have created, you have made?" What is the difference between abundance that is given from God and abundance you yourself made? The difference is, abundance from God creates gratitude and

thankfulness because it's a free gift, and you are thankful for that, but also at the same time, not only that, it's easy to share with others. Abundance you created yourself is hard to share, but people who believe that their abundance is from God, then they share their resources with others. We have to fight for justice. Always be conscious. Whether at work, school, or with your family.

That's why I was very interested in feminism for a while because women's rights have been abused and treated badly. That's why I was, for a while, very interested in liberation theology, because in South America, the people have been treated so badly. The poor people. This is a part of Jesus' teaching. Jesus always stood up for those who are weak, vulnerable and powerless.

## **Love Kindness**

The second pillar is to love kindness. To love kindness is to live with mercy, and then the best word that came to me comes to me is compassion. I told you the word compassion is a combination of two words, come and passion. Come is together, passion is suffering. So, life that suffers with those who suffer. That's a good life. We cannot take another people's suffering casually. When we hear another people's suffering, we cannot just here from one ear and then let it go out from the other ear. We cannot let it happen that way.

Sometimes I go to a Canadian church, and I speak about some stories of suffering, it is very different. When they hear it, I can feel that they feel it. They feel the suffering in the story that I share with them. That's empathy. Compassion is empathy. When people suffer around you, we got to suffer with them. You cannot just look at it like, "Okay, too bad." Sympathy is different from compassion. That's why the last two weeks, we have collected offering for Alberta. It's not much, but at least we got to do something about it. We got to share resources to alleviate that suffering from people. The suffering of the people is real, and we have to do our best to alleviate that suffering. It doesn't matter what it is. That's a human thing to do. That's a right thing to do.

## Walk Humbly

Thirdly, walk humbly with God. Don't think that you can change anything on your own. Don't think that you can change the world on your own. We humbly ask God for help. This is to walk humbly with God. We'll do our best to the justice and show our compassion, but ultimately it is God who truly changes the world, so we'll never be discouraged. We'll try our best, but we'll never be discouraged. Humility is the same as trusting in God. From that trust, true happiness comes.

Working hard, eating healthy food, exercising regularly, and doing things that you enjoy are external things and it is about you and it's important. But living with a sense of justice, living a life of compassion and living humbly trusting in God are internal things, and is all about others and about the world we live in. We need both, but what's lacking in you? What is lacking in the modern world? I think the latter is lacking.

## Your Good Life & Ours

Half of a good life is not a good life. A good life is complete. It's not half of it. Half of a good life is not a good life. We can only have a good life together, not alone. You can never be happy, you can never have a good life alone on your own. We can only be happy with others, together. Being happy when others are suffering is not a good life. It's not a good life.

People like Dr. Farmer, I told you about the book, 'Mountains Beyond Mountains', he gets about \$100,000 a year teaching at Harvard medical school. He doesn't even know where that money goes to. He lives in a church basement and he go out and just does the work. What a wonderful example. He said, "Being happy when others are suffering is not good a life. In the process of helping those who are suffering, you become happy and you find good life. What Micah said was a summary of the preaching of all the prophets. That's what all the prophets say. Simply is summarizing into these three; do justice, live with compassion, and walk humbly with God. Those three things are a summary of the prophet's message, and the summary of your life and our life.

# You are the Rock

August 28, 2016

Matthew 16:13-20

## **The Highest Compliment**

What you see in today's passage is the highest compliment any human being can get. It was more than Usain Bolt and more than Michael Phelps, much more than what is given to almost super human beings. I watch the Olympics. I enjoy it thoroughly. Bolt did not run like human being, he ran like a horse. Just amazing. They were amazing. But what Peter got was a much bigger compliment. Jesus said, He would give him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. He said, "whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you lose on earth will lose in heaven". What kind of amazing privilege is that? What kind of power? The keys to the kingdom, the keys to heaven! That is amazing authority, power, privilege, compliment and praise he got from Jesus. Jesus gave him a new name. He was Simon sort of Jonah, but Jesus said, now you will be called Peter, which means rock. He said, "I'll build my church on the rock". That is a high privilege, glory and compliment that he got. I wonder what Peter would have thought at that time. I don't think Peter had any idea of what Jesus was talking about. He probably had an open mouth and was wondering, 'the keys to the kingdom? On me? You're going to build your church? What does that mean?' Peter probably didn't even understand what Jesus was talking about. Peter, whom we know, he was unlike a rock. His name was 'rock'. The name was given to him, but he was not like a rock.

## **I Will Make You a Rock**

The name 'rock' didn't really suit Peter. He was flimsy, he was very influenced by circumstances. He was a wishy-washy person. At one moment he was saying one thing and the next moment here would do something totally contradictory to what he said. He said to Jesus, "I'll follow you to death", and as soon as the situation became very difficult, he denied Jesus three times. Simon was not at all like Peter the Rock, even though he was given that new name. I mean he did all this after he was given the name 'rock'. So I wonder what Jesus meant when he said to Simon, you are Peter, because he was not like Peter. What did Jesus mean when he

said that you are Peter. I reflected on this, and I realized that what Jesus really meant was, “I will make you a rock”.

## **Our Foundation is God**

I'll make you Peter. You're Peter now and you will become like Peter. You may feel that that's not the end of it. You are still Peter and you will become Peter. Often, we get discouraged about ourselves. We are affected by our circumstances. Sometimes our existence is so flimsy, we go back and forth, up and down. We don't have a solid existence. We don't have a solid life. Sometimes we are on very shaky ground and our emotions go up and down. Sometimes we feel good when we do well, and we feel positive about our life. We feel confident that we can do almost anything. But when we fail, when we don't do very well, we get so negative about ourselves. We get so negative about our life, we just don't have confidence. We go up and down. Sometimes we even have four seasons in a day. We feel great at one moment. The next moment we feel so lousy. We're not like a rock, we are not solid.

Look at Ryan Lochte. He got many medals. Once he even beat Michael Phelps. Even at these Olympics, he got the gold medal. He was at the top, the peak of his career and his glory, but on the way back to the Olympic Village, he had his friends vandalized the washroom of a gas stations and he lied. He said, “I was wronged at gunpoint”. The whole world was shocked. They thought that an Olympic gold medalist was robbed at gunpoint, but he lied just to cover his bad behaviour. He lost all these sponsorships. He doesn't have sponsorships anymore. I don't know if he can come out to the next Olympics. We are weak and fall short of God's glory, but my friend, our solid foundation is not our strength. Our solid foundation is God's desire to help us and make us the person who we're meant to be. Our solid foundation is not on me. Our solid foundation is on God's desire to me into Peter, the rock.

## **God Makes Us**

Peter did not become Peter by his own strength or because of his good solid personality. Peter became Peter because of God's endless desire to make him Peter. If you don't give up, God does not give up on you, but if you give up, even God cannot help you. Where is your solid foundation? You know my biggest problem of modern generation and the biggest

problem of this generation is narcissism. I think that is the greatest problem. We have to fight against it. When things are going okay, that's fine, that's good. But once you start failing, you start losing yourself. Narcissism cannot lift you up, it cannot save you. That's the problem of narcissism.

You are the rock, not because of who you are, but because of who God is. You're the rock not because you don't fall or fail, but because God does not give up on you. On you, God wants to build his church. Now we have to have confidence in our life. God gave you so much power and authority and God called you to be the rock, to be solid, don't live by how you feel about yourselves or with the identity of the people imposed on you. Don't let the world get you down. Don't let your mind get scattered, you must have sharp focus like a rock and not like quicksand. What do you stand on? On yourself? Or on the God who never gives up on you as you strive to become the rock? I try my best in Ministry but many times I feel that my best is not enough. I fail, I get discouraged. I get discouraged about myself when it comes to Thursday. I get very anxious because the message does not come easily. I wait and wait, study and study but still the message doesn't come. Even yesterday even, I told my wife "I'm in trouble. I have no message to speak tomorrow", which was Sunday.

## **Faith of the Mustard Seed**

I have to wait. I get discouraged about myself and about my performance all the time, but I will not let myself down. I'll try my best, but at the end of it I will always go back to God, who never gives up on me. No matter what happens to me, I'll still go back to God at the end of it because God is a solid foundation, not me. Not my ability, not my intelligence. God is a solid foundation and I need to continuously go back there and pick myself up again and stand up.

If I use myself as a foundation, I have lived my life on very, very shaky ground. If you have this foundation, you will not have hope. Even when you are helpless, when you feel that you're not good enough, if there is faith of a mustard seed, then you will have hope. That hope will not disappoint you. That hope will bring you back to be able to stand and move on with your journey. But when you trust yourself, when you are down then everything crumbles, everything dies. When you have the faith of the mustard seed, even when you are down, you will not lose hope and that hope will make us strong.

That is your foundation. Have the faith of a mustard seed. Just because you fail, don't give up. Look to God and you'll see hope. That's good news. The good news is that my life is not just based on me. My life is based on God's desire to make me who I'm meant to be. When I look at all of you, there is so much talent, so much ability. But we need more character to be able to persevere, to continuously persist, and to reach out for a dream that you have. I hope that through that faith, you build that character. The bottom generation was lacking in intelligence, but our generation was lacking in character. If you're narcissistic, you'd never build character. When you have faith, you'll be able to start building your character and that character will carry on. We all fail, we all get discouraged, we all fall, but who's going to stand up and carry on? The one who has faith in God's desire to want to help you. I hope that we all build that character in our lives.



# Searching for the Will of God

October 2, 2016

Romans 12:1-2

## **Lifestyle**

Today I'm going to talk about the lifestyle, lifestyle of seeking God's will. I think that's a lifestyle, you know, knowing God's will is not really specifically; what do I eat today or what do I wear? It's not like that. It is a lifestyle about continuously – every day, every moment – your lifestyle is seeking God's will. That's what Christian lifestyle is all about. Christian life is not just what to do, what not to do. Not only that, but a general Christian lifestyle is about; "What is the will of God for me?" So daily you're searching for the will of God. To me, the most beautiful image of a human being, any human being, is the image of a person praying to God, struggling to search for the will of God. I found this image there, a person praying to God, asking God to show or reveal to me the will of God.

In that sense, the image of Jesus prayer in Gethsemane is to me, the most beautiful image of any human being. Jesus was praying and struggling hard to ultimately search for the will, the will of God, not his own will. That is the most beautiful image that I can think of. But it's not just Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. What is beautiful about Jesus is that throughout his life all he did was really search for the will of God. You know, what impressed me about Jesus is not that he was so wise and smart and powerful and performed a lot of miracles and ultimately sacrificed and suffered and died... it's not really that. What really impresses me about Jesus was that all his life he was searching for the will of God. And that is the most beautiful thing, the most beautiful lifestyle I can think of.

## **Today's World**

In modern days, for many of us, searching for the will of God is a foreign concept. We don't do that anymore. And also, sometimes it is an uncomfortable concept, because many people did horrible things in the name of the will of God. Even now, there are people who are doing horrible things saying that, "oh, this is the will of God. God told me to do this." And so that's why the name, the will of God, got a bad name. We don't even search for the will, and we don't even know the will of God. So, it's hard to

really talk about the will of God in that way. Many of us gave up living out the will of God. We gave up searching for the will of God. “I’ll do my best with my life, with my morality, with my best effort, I’ll work hard, I’ll take care of my family. I’ll do good, try to do good things as much as possible... But the will of God? I’m not sure. I don’t know. First of all, it’s hard to find out what’s the will of God, and I just don’t know how to go about doing that.” So, a lot of us just gave up a the will of God. But you know, Christian life, the will of God is the ultimate purpose and ultimate goal of human life.

Ultimately, if it’s not the will of God, what kind of life is that? We’re believers. We do believe that God exists and if God exists, God has something to do with this world, and God has something to do with me, and God must have some kind of will for this world, or for me. So, if we don’t really seek the will of God, what is that life? What is that Christian life? All of us, we wonder. So the will of God is the most important ultimate goal of life but in modern days, people don’t care about the will of God. Very sad in a way. Very sad. As I was preparing this message, I was even asking myself, “Will people care about the will of God?” That constantly kept coming to me. “Will people care about the will of God? Then what will I say to them?” In modern society, in the modern world, the will of God has become a very foreign concept.

In today’s scripture passages, St. Paul said, “So that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Hear the words, “so that”. “So that” means ‘ultimately’. You do all these things so that, ultimately, you may be able to find the will of God.

## **The Will of God**

That was like Paul’s life. Ultimately, he was searching for the will of God. He didn’t just live a good life, he was searching for the will of God. His life was not to actualize his potential to the maximum. It was not to become a good example to other people. Paul’s ultimate goal of life was to understand the will of God and live accordingly. That should be what we need to seek every day, the will of God, because that matters. There are things that matter in life and there are things that do not matter that much. The will of God is one of those things that matter a lot, and everything is a means by which you find the will of God. So, in life we have to understand the difference between the goal and means by which you achieve the goal. If you get confused with goals and means, your life becomes ruined. If means becomes goal, then your life becomes ruined. We make money but

that's a means, by which ultimately, we may find and search for the will of God. That is the goal. There are means by which we achieve the goal and making money itself cannot be the goal. Becoming a great person cannot be the goal. Or just taking care of family cannot just be the goal. Those are means by which ultimately, we search for the will of God, and that is the goal of our life.

When God first came to Moses, "Moses, you go. My people are suffering in Egypt. Go and free them." And Moses said, "Lord, God, I can't do it. I'm very, very comfortable here. You know, I have wife and a family and, oh, this life is really, really good. I'm 80 years old, I just want to stay here and finish my life peacefully. And also, I cannot even speak well. I'm not eloquent. Can you send somebody else? I think they will fit better. They'll do a better job than me." But ultimately at the end, Moses found the will of God and he went. I thank God that Moses understood the will of God. Without, Moses, God's history would not have continued, and we thank Moses for taking the will of God seriously.

Jesus could have lived comfortably as a nice guy. If he didn't really care about God's will, then there is no cross, my friend. If he did not take God's will sincerely and live out the will of God, we don't have the cross. We don't have salvation. We thank Jesus and all others who lived a life of searching for the will of God in human history. They're great people, great people who were looking for the will of God and lived out the will of God, and they made a dent in the universe. They made a difference in the world.

## **Search, Seek, Find**

My high school friends, from when you're young, search for the will of God. I wish, I pray that from this church we may produce those great people who make a difference in the world. When you find the will of God, I believe that we can do that. The will of God, you cannot just find it just like that. You continuously search for the will of God and then slowly and slowly you become formed in a certain way, and then you realize when you look back, "Oh, that was the will of God." It's not like, "Oh, this is the will of God, do this." But as you try to really put your life according to the will of God, then your life flows in a certain way, guided by the will of God, and when you look back, you realize that, "Oh, that was the will of God." And you will do tremendous good to humanity. You will do tremendous good to all of the people around you. What is the will of God? Seek it. Jesus said, "If you

seek it, you will find it.” So, what is the will of God? Seek it. Don’t give up, and you will find. Knock on it. The door will open to you.

Each person has a unique will of God. I don’t know what the will of God for you is. You have to find it yourself. There is something that you need to do. I cannot tell you what the will of God for you is. You have to find your own will of God. The will of God is not something that you create, or one day be like, “Oh, I’d like to do this. This must be the will of God.” No, that’s not how you find the will of God. You wait and wait and search and search and seek and seek, and ultimately you understand... “Ah, this is will of God.” So, when I look at Jesus’ life and when I look at Paul... wow, they have a power of life. How do they know for sure about what they would need to do and what they want to do? That’s amazing. Most people; “I don’t know, I just live.” That’s how most people, mediocre people live. But these great people, they know what the will of God is and really have a conviction about their life. And that’s what is great about these great people. So, search. Seek. And you’ll be able to find and understand the will of God in your life.

## **Your Path, Your Purpose (Is Unique)**

But even though I cannot tell you what his will of God for you, I can give you two kind of helpful attitudes. That’s not something that I got, it is something that Paul teaches us in today’s scripture passage. First thing is, to not be conformed to this world. Do not be conformed to this world. That doesn’t mean that this world is bad and there’s evil and not have anything to do with this world because this world is bad. “Get away from this world and live your own life or go to the gulf or to the mountain and live your own life.” That’s not what he’s saying. To not be conformed to this world means that you don’t get immersed in this world. Don’t get immersed in this world. When you’re immersed in this world, you lose your spiritual sense. You’re filled with this worldly thinking. You cannot have a spiritual sense. You become desensitized to God, to spirituality.

So, you become desensitized, you cannot feel the spiritual guidance. And that’s what happens to many, many of us. The will of God is a very foreign concept, so do not be immersed in this world. Sometimes you need to separate yourself and be your own person. Don’t be influenced by your friends. Don’t be influenced by people of this world or think that this is what is life supposed to be about and that this is what life is like – do not just

listen to them blindly. Think for yourself, “Is that really what God wants from your life?” It doesn’t matter how many people around you do it. Hundreds of friends, they may do it, but ask yourself, “Is that really what God wants from me?” rather than blindly following them. You need to be awake and you have to know yourself, who you are and what you want, and then find your own way of living. That’s the first thing. Do not be conformed to this world. Don’t try to be popular. Being popular doesn’t last too long. That’s should not be your goal. Don’t try to be popular. Find your own life. Find your own way. That is what it means not to be conformed to this world. It is about your mindset.

Second thing, St. Paul said, “Be transformed by the renewing of your minds.” Transformation. How do you be transformed? I think the best way is the scripture. Scripture study. That transforms us. Scripture study gives us critical thinking. We just started Wednesday Bible study, Women’s Bible Study again. We finished the second week. I already see the difference in the second week. First week I get them together... nothing really. I mean, we haven’t done it for a few months and they’re just... And then second week, they’re getting focused again. We are so fragile. If you don’t study the scripture, it’s hard to get critical thinking.

## Reflection

So, I’m sorry, but if you’re just living a religious life, coming back forth, just to church and home, there won’t be much of a difference. You will be just a church person. That’s fine too. That’s fine with me. But finding the will of God that way, it’s going to be very, very difficult. You need to be transformed by the renewing of your minds. In other words, the critical thinking has to go on in your brain every moment. Every single moment, your consciousness needs to be enriched by the word of God. The word of God is not just memorizing the scripture. It’s the way you think, critical thinking, because as you study the scripture, you see how different that teaching is from the teaching of that world when it was written. They all had critical thinking.

We need to understand that to be able to discern the will of God. The will of God is not what popular people, or most people follow, okay? Just because majority of the society follow a certain way, I don’t believe that that is the will of God. The will of God is not determined by the multitude. Jesus was a

lonely voice. Paul was a lonely voice. That's why they were persecuted, and ultimately, they were killed. But that lonely voice is a beautiful voice. That life is beautiful life, I believe. And I'd like to see that kind of real, cool people. You need to be tough in your thinking, in your mind. Searching for the will of God, living out the will of God, that's the goal. That's the most beautiful thing you can do for yourself, for your family, for the church, for the world, and for God.

# Celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the Church Anniversary

August 30, 2016

Philippians 1:3-11

## **20 Years**

As I look back on the last 20 years, the first thing that comes to my mind is, wow, time really flies. 20 years have already gone by. And another thing that comes to my mind is thankfulness. I'm thankful because God has been so good to us.

## **The Mysterious Hands of God**

We've all experienced God's mysterious hands leading this church. The mysterious hands of God. These mysterious hands of God not only lead this church, but I believe that they lead our lives. Our lives are led by God's mysterious hands. The way our lives are unraveled is a mystery, I believe. It's not what we make. It is a mystery. And there are God's mysterious hands that lead our lives. As he has lead this church for the last 20 years, I do believe that God will lead this church in a way we cannot even fathom. How God will lead this church in the future is unknown, I cannot even fathom it, but there will be the beautiful hands of God that guide us mysteriously.

## **Live With Confidence**

As we live our lives, my friends, I believe that we should live with confidence. Live your lives with confidence, because there's a big difference between living your life with confidence and living your life without confidence, and I'll choose to live my life with confidence. Confidence is so important in our lives. Doesn't matter what you do, confidence is so important. When we live with confidence, we are not scared of challenges. That's what living with confidence is like. You're not scared of challenges. Sometimes you may fail, yes, but failure is no longer a reason to quit. When you have confidence, failure simply means learning a good lesson. That's all. Failure is not a reason to quit. Failure is simple; a good lesson for you to learn from and move on.

That's people with confidence. We dare to try new things. New things will always bring us the uncertainty and the unknown, but the uncertainty and the unknown are not a reason to quit. Embracing the unknown, that is the beauty of God's gift. Longing and embracing the unknown, that is the beauty of God's gift. Uncertainty doesn't cause fear. We'd rather have beautiful longing and we embrace the unknown because that is the gift of life, and that is the gift of God for all of us. The uncertainty and the unknown mean going beyond where we are. That's all it means. Going beyond where we are. It means new opportunity and new change. And when we have confidence we have peace of mind because we know everything will be alright. That's why you have peace of mind. There may be difficult times, but we know that difficult times will not be with you forever. Soon good times will come. That's why you have peace of mind when you live your life with confidence.

So, we wait with peace, but when we live without confidence we'll have no strength and no passion. We'll constantly worry. We'll constantly let fear consume us and paralyze us. We'll be busy maintaining the status quo. People who live without confidence, when there is no change, they think that's good news, because they're scared of changes. They don't want change, so there's no change and then they say, "Oh, good life." They will never get out of their own boundaries because they are continuously searching for safety.

For people with confidence, walls are only hurdles for you to overcome, but for people without confidence, walls are protection, so they build higher walls. That's the difference between people who live with confidence and people who live without confidence. So, living with confidence is very important, but the question is, where do we get confidence? How do we have confidence? From our own ability? Or are we born with it? Some people are born with confidence. Some people are born living pessimistically. Some people are more pessimistic by nature, more cynical. Some people are more positive, and I don't really know why.

## **St. Paul's Confidence**

But I do know where St. Paul got his confidence. This is what he said, "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." That was the source of Paul's confidence. The one who began a good work will bring it to completion.



That was where St. Paul got confidence. Not from his ability. I don't know whether he was born with it or not, probably not, but he knew that the one who began a good work will bring it to completion, so he doesn't worry. Everything is a process, but in the end God will bring it to completion in God's time. Paul's confidence had nothing to do with himself. It wasn't from his ability or from his nature. It was God. Paul's confidence was God.

## **In God's Hands**

And that's what I believe too. I have confidence not in me, but in God. I do have confidence. That's what I learned from my ministry in this church. God who began a good work will bring it to completion. I was 33 or 34, I spent my golden time here in this church and I've learned so much from the ministry, but one thing I learned, I have confidence that God who began a good work will bring it to completion in his time.

This church is not in our hands. This church is in God's hands.

As a matter of fact, your life is not in your hands. Your Life is in God's good hands. Do you believe that? Your life is not in your hands, your life is in God's good hands. That's what I believe about my children too. As I raised them, I was so busy, so I couldn't spend much time with them. I always felt sorry to Josh and Grace. But I always believed that God will take care of them. God who began a good work in them will bring it to completion at the right time. And we don't decide that right time. God decides that right time. So, all parents, trust that God who began a good work in your children will bring it to completion in God's time.

## **We Need Others**

I realized these days, life is too big to hold with my two hands. I realized that. Life is way too big. When I was younger, I thought life was pretty small. I thought I could control it. I could put it in my hand. But as I got older, I realized that life is too big to hold with my two hands. We need other people's hands. That was what the last 20 years were like. There have been so many people who gave their hands to hold up this church. We can never do it alone. There have been so many good hands. You don't know, but there have been so many good hands that help hold up this church.

## **The Book of Romans**

Romans is a beautiful book and there are a lot of good lessons and as we study Galatians, it's a beautiful book, too right? We learned so much from Galatians, but Romans is much later. It was written when Paul's theology was much more mature. It's a beautiful book, but what is most inspiring for me is the last chapter. In the last chapter, there's no teaching, there is nothing. But in the last chapter, it just says greet this person and that person, he just makes a whole list of greet all these people and while I was reading that, I realized that these are the people who were with Paul in his ministry. All of them work so hard, so it was not Paul alone who built a church. All these people worked together to build the church. Our life is like that my friends.

## **We Are Being Shaped**

We never made it all by ourselves. I didn't make it, 20 years of ministry in this church, more than I shaped this congregation. I think this congregation shaped me more. They taught me, they have shaped who I am and my thinking. This congregation has shaped me tremendously.

Our life is like that. You don't make your life by yourself, you are being shaped by the people around you, whether you like it or not. They have shaped you, your parents and your friends and all these people have shaped your life. Our life is made by others and with others. Sometimes we argue, sometimes we disagree. We challenge each other, but we pray together. We cry together. And most of all, we all know that we are all in this ministry together.

## **God's Invisible Presence**

More than anything else, it was God who has been all along as an invisible presence. God's invisible presence is the most powerful presence. When we were down, we cried out and God lifted us up. When we stood helplessly, not knowing what to do in order to go, we prayed, and God broke open the door for us to go through. In spite of many mistakes we made, God worked through our mistakes.

When I look back, all I can say is this, I didn't know any better.

That's all I can say. When I look back, I didn't know any better. Don't you feel that sometimes? When you look back at your life 20 years ago, 30 years ago, or some of you are younger than 30 so, when you look back, "Oh geez, I didn't know any better." I just see how blinded I was, but God did not mind it God worked through our imperfections. Now we are entering into a new chapter of our church, not as a teenager anymore. Twenty years is not a teenager anymore. You're entering into adulthood. As we enter into adulthood, I hope that we also become spiritually more mature.

## **Believe in the Church**

I don't know about you, but I do believe in the church. I think among human communities; the church is the most beautiful place and now I see why God chose Church. So, I believe in the church, not necessarily as an institution, but as living body, as a living community. We have all come together here.

Let us build this church beautifully together. Small hands that you give, they matter. In the next 20 years, let us build a beautiful church together and then give that church to our children so that they may carry it on. Let us build. Let us place the soil. Let us work hard. You don't come to church just for yourself. You come to church to build community. Then your children and their children after them, they'll benefit from this church. You are doing valuable things, worthy things in your life. If we build this church together. Let us have confidence in God who began a good work and God will bring it to completion in God's time.

# Our King is Shepherd

November 20, 2016

Ezekiel 34:11-16

## Advent Season

Today is Christ the king Sunday. From next week we enter into the advent. Advent is a celebration of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into this world. So, it's like a celebration of Christmas season from next Sunday. But advent is the according to church calendar, the Christian calendar, advent is the beginning of the new year. So, the first week begins from next week. And so today is the last week, according to Church calendar. And today is Christ the king Sunday. So, you can see early Christians, they celebrate, they had this schedule for the whole year. They begin with waiting for the coming of the Lord, and they end with Christ proclaiming that Christ is the king. And that tells us about our lives too. We also begin our lives with waiting for the Lord, but we end at the end of it. Ultimately, we proclaim that Christ is the king of our lives. When we say that Christ is the king, that also means I am not the king. Christ is the king. I am not the king. That's what we proclaim.

## God is the King

We are not the king. We are not in control of our lives. It is Christ. It is God who is in control of our lives. That's what we confess. And that's what we boldly proclaim in our lives. And Saint Paul expressed the same thing in a little bit different way. This is what he said. It is no longer I, who live, but Christ who lives in me. This is how Paul saw his life. It is no longer him who lives in his life, but it is Christ who lived in Paul's life. It is a wonderful statement. It is a mystical union between Christ and me. And that is a unique message of Christians. We Christians believe that we are connected and deeply connected with Christ, it's almost like Christ is living in me and I live in Christ, that mystical union. I was possible through the spirit.

And I do believe that that is the wisdom of living a good life instead of trying to control my love with my own strength. We let God come into our lives every day and let God reign and rule our life. And that is a wisdom. And when we start doing that, we experience freedom and salvation. And that is

the way for us to come alive. How we come alive, when that mystical union is possible, when Christ fills my life, and when I know that I'm in Christ's hands that's when we experience true aliveness. Life comes alive as we enter into God's world. And therefore, when God flows into our life, what do you experience? You experience that you're so small compared to the greatness of God's world. When I enter into God's word, all of a sudden, we become very small, almost invisible when I enter into God's world. But when I'm that small, actually that's when I'm the biggest, that's when I am the largest, when we enter into God's world, that's what we experience. The power we experience is not comparable to the power you can extract from your own strength and there in that world, in God's world you experience freedom. This is what freedom looks like, the freedom, not doing whatever you want, but freedom of not having to do anything. The freedom that gives me just a wonderful peace that words cannot express beyond our understanding, that surpasses all understanding, that freedom that gives me that peace, the freedom that gives me confidence in life. This is not something we can ever experience. When you try to be in control of your own life, you can never experience that. It is a spiritual experience it's a spiritual freedom. This is a treasure you get when you let yourself totally in God's hands and this treasure is hidden to the people.

Only when you enter into God's world, you experience this, you discover this treasure. When we surrender ourselves, we will experience freedom, peace and confidence, but when you grab on to yourselves, worries and anxieties and fear will consume you. So, you will either live with peace, freedom and confidence, or will you live with worries, anxiety and fear. As you enter into God's realm, something wonderful happens. In today's scripture Ezekiel used the image of a shepherd to describe the relationship between God and God's people and King David also saw the relationship in that way. In Psalm 23, he said, "the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want," and Jesus also saw himself as a shepherd. He said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." So, you're not alone. You are a sheep, but you have a good shepherd who leads your life. You're not making your life on your own. Good shepherds make your life, Good shepherds leads your life. We have the best king and our king is our shepherd and our shepherd leads our life. When we don't know where to go, our shepherd will show us the way. Not only God will show us the way, but God will strengthen us, and God will tell us what to do.

## God Leads Me

As we look back on our lives. I can see God's mysterious hands that have upheld me, led me, guided me all this time. Sometimes those hands were invisible, while I was going through that it was invisible. But when I look back, there were the mysterious, invisible hands of God that have led me. So yesterday we had a session retreat. And then one word that remains with me is mystery. How God has led this congregation in a mysterious way. And that's what I came out with from the retreat, mystery. God has been good to you all this time and you have nothing to worry about because God who has been good to you all this time. Will be good to you for the rest of your life.

You have nothing to worry about because you have a good shepherd with you. As we let God be our shepherd who leads me. Wonderful things will happen in our lives, of all things what I can say is you will have confidence in life. Confidence that the world gifts, confidence from God. The confidence will give you the courage. Yes, worries and anxieties will be always with you, for as long as you breathe, while you live on this earth, worries and anxieties will never depart from you. They will always be with you, but when you let Christ rule in your life, these worries and anxieties will not turn into fear that paralyzes you. That's what is amazing about letting Christ rule in your life, these worries and anxieties become just petty, worries and anxiety. We will always be worrying and anxious, but these worries and anxieties will not turn into fear that paralyzes you when you let Christ rule in your life. It is fear that kills you. That is what makes us so passive and defensive. Well, I saw one movie and it said, "fear makes me live." Yeah, fear makes you maybe survive, but fear will not help you live. You will only survive through the fear, but fear will never make you live. As you let Christ be your shepherd, one thing great about that is fear will never thrive in you. When you let Christ rule in your life, fear will never thrive in you. Your heart will not brew fear. Your heart will not cultivate fear. That's what happens when you let Christ rule in your life. Fear will not grow within you it cannot survive. Fear cannot survive within you.

## How to Face Challenges

You know, when you experience challenges in your life, what is the first thing that you see? When the challenges come to you? What is the first thing you see? The first thing you see is how small you are, how weak you

are, how helpless and hopeless you are. That's what challenges make you see. So, when the challenges come, the first thing that you see is how small you are. And then as soon as you see that, fear starts thriving in you, and fear always makes you small, and controls you in that way. Fear first makes you very small, and then fear controls you. People who use fear, like bullies, that's what they do. They know your vulnerable spots. They know how weak you are, and they make you focus on your weakness and they make you feel so small and, in that way, they control you. There are some bad people around us in the world who use fear to control the people. They always threaten you, scare you, and make you small and try to control you. But as we let Christ be our shepherd, you know what happens? Yes. You see your own weaknesses first. But you see beyond. That's what happens when you let Christ rule in your life. You see your weakness like everybody else, but somehow you see beyond and you see God's strength beyond your weakness, so fear cannot use that weakness to control you anymore. Every time we see weakness, our eyes go beyond somehow and see God's strength. Our eyes go to the one ahead of us, leading us.

## **St. Paul's Insight**

There's a wonderful, spiritual insight St. Paul saw. He realized, after he met Christ, he still saw his weakness, but somehow, he was able to see beyond his weakness. He was able to see God's strength, and that is what St. Paul confessed to God, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. So, our boats are all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I'm content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, then I'm strong. Whenever I see my own weakness, I see beyond, I see strength." That's the kind of insight Paul got after meeting Christ, he never experienced that before, but after meeting Christ, after inviting Christ in his life, he not only sees his own weakness, but he saw beyond, so he was not scared of his own weaknesses because he was able to see the strength beyond his own weaknesses. In that process, your presence becomes free from the oppression of worries and anxieties, and you can see much more clearly what to do. You can see much more clearly where you're going. This is how our shepherd leads us, open our eyes to be able to see that.

## **Believe that Christ is Our King**

We are living in a very precarious, uncertain period of our world. Every morning, I read newspaper and it's scary. Sometimes I get scared. Where is this world going? Bullies rule the world. Continuously, fear traps people. We're living in a very, very uncertain period of our world. More than ever before, we need to understand very clearly that Christ is the king, not anyone, not me. Nothing is our king. Only Christ is our king. The fear will not consume you. Don't let powerful people control you with fear. Stand strong. Stand tall.

Christ is our king. When you let Christ rule in you as your king, you will be able to break through the walls that imprison you. You'll be able to walk through the fog that hinders your way. That's what King David confessed. "The Lord is my shepherd," and later he said, "even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me, and your rod and your staff, they comfort me. The Lord is my shepherd and the Lord will lead my life." Last week, I was sitting in my room. I felt so helpless seeing the world, but that's a message God gave me." Don't worry. I am the king. I am the shepherd. I'll lead this world. I'll lead you. There's nothing for you to worry about." My Christian fellows let us stand tall and stand strong. Just follow the truth that Jesus taught us, and Christ will rule. That is the power that I believe in. Jesus, he did not achieve salvation with his power, he actually let go of all his power. Whenever he used divine power, he said, "Be quiet, don't tell anyone," and he helplessly died on the cross having all his power shift off from him. He had no power whatsoever on the cross and he died, but he released the power of God's resurrection through his obedience to the truth. He let God's power be released. He let the resurrection, be released. We're living in a world where contradiction rules. Using the power of this world, you're just intensifying the contradiction. This is a time that we turn to God's power and God's strength, and that power, will lead us to the green pasture. Let us sing together.



# Overcoming the Temptation

March 5, 2017

Matthew 4:1-11

## **Temptation**

We usually associate temptation with sin, for example, breaking the rules or breaking God's commandment. And that's what temptation is. Temptation is what makes you sin. But as you read today's scripture passage somehow it has anything to do with sin, turning stones into loaves of bread and jumping off from the pinnacle of the temple. How are they sin? I don't see obvious sin then. So, I realized that there is a deeper dimension about temptation is not just what you see on the surface. So, I like to reflect with you on those three temptations stories and then see the implication of it and maybe hopefully how we overcome our temptation.

## **Making a Living and Needs**

The first temptation was about turning stones into loaves of bread. What does this reveal about temptation? Turning stones into loaves of bread? I think it is to do with survival. I think is to do with making a living. It's not just about making bread. It's about making a living. Satan told Jesus to tell these stones to become loaves of bread. I realized that making living is a very big part of our lives. We all make living. We work hard. You go to school, you get a job and you make a living, isn't it? Is that not why you go to school? And then you build your career to make a living. That's very important. So, all of you, all of us really work hard and I see our people working really hard at their work. And then our Hi-C students study very hard to get into good university and then a to get a good job and to make a good living. That's our responsibility because it's very important. But don't you realize that since it is so important, it becomes temptation? Because it is so important, it becomes temptation. If it is not important, it doesn't become temptation, but since it is so important, it becomes temptation. We become obsessed with it and forget about everything else, but I want to tell you, making a living is important, but life is not just about making a living. I'm not saying that making a living is not important, but life is more than just making a living. I hope that you realize that life is more than making a living.

My friends since it is so important, don't you think that we have to leave it in God's hands instead of taking charge since it's so important? Actually, God will take care of our basic needs. Jesus told us to pray like this. Give us this day, our daily bread. And Jesus also taught us this lesson. Seek, strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. If you strive for the Kingdom of God and righteousness, everything else will be added unto you. You don't need to worry about it. As we trust that God will take care of our needs, then your eyes open and you can start seeing that life is more than just making a living. That's when life opens up. That's when life opens up for you. That's when you find treasure in life. Why do you think Peter left all his fish to follow Jesus even when he caught much fish? Because he found treasure in life. So, as you leave all your basic needs to God that's when you see there's something more beautiful about life than making a good living. Work hard but find the treasure in life. If you don't find that treasure in life, then you are in temptation. If you think life is all about making a living, then you're in temptation, but once you leave all your basic needs in God's hands, then you can see, life is much more than just making a living. That's the first temptation and how to overcome temptation. Don't worry about when you will eat, what should you wear. Don't worry about it. Doesn't God know how to feed you? Just leave it in God's hands and then you'll be fine. You'll be able to see what's important in life.

## **Security and Protection**

The second temptation was like this. Satan took Jesus to the top of the temple and told Him, if you are the Son of God, throw yourself down for it is written. He will command His angels concerning you and on their hands. They will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against stone. So what kind of temptation is that? It was the temptation of planting seeds of doubt in Jesus' mind. If Satan didn't say that, Jesus would not even think about it. It is like telling someone during golf to be careful of the water. After you tell them, they will always be thinking "oh, the water is that way. I have to be careful or the ball will go into the water." Satan was testing Jesus whether God will protect him or not. Protection is just as important as survival, as important as making living, which we talked about in the first temptation.

We can never protect ourselves 100 percent of the time. That is the truth. That's the reality. We can never protect ourselves 100 percent of the time, even if you increase the military budget or have security all the time. We can never protect ourselves 100 percent of the time. Last Tuesday, I was all by myself in this building and then there was a guy who then came to this building in a pickup truck and he rang the bell, but we don't even have a bell. He came to the door, but the door was locked. He was about to go, and I thought he was here to fix our church. So, I ran out and opened the door. And as I called him, he came to me and as soon as I saw his face, I thought, "I'm in trouble." This guy looks so disturbed. He was half crying and all that. And then he told me, "I need help." "What can I do for you?" And he, he was saying, "FBI is following me, the police tapped into my phone," and many other scenarios. I mean he's saying all of that but just last week I talked about welcoming the stranger on Sundays, so I just can't just kick him out, but to bring him in is too dangerous. I was scared so I went, "okay, come and follow me." So, I went to 102, there was Simon and Reverend Chung, at least they're bigger than me and also "if I'm going to die, I'll die with you."

So, we sat down together and then we listened to him for about 30 minutes and he was going on, he was crying and he was banging the desk. He was angry about his problems, and we're just listening for 30 minutes. In the end, Simon gave Joe's hospital address and said, "you can go there." He was so thankful. After 30 minutes, he said, "you know, nobody really listened to me with without judgment. You guys were so good, you listened to me for 30 minutes and all that," and later he left. But what if he came with the intention to harm me? Luckily he didn't come to harm me, but if he came with the intention to harm me, I would not be able to protect myself. We cannot protect ourselves with 100 percent certainty. Just last month 2 KSM families were robbed. Their house was totally robbed. They waited for about two weeks and when they saw an opportunity, they went in and out and timed it perfectly. Both took place in North York. So those who live in North York, be careful. We cannot protect ourselves from a disease. We cannot protect ourselves from disaster. We cannot protect ourselves from evil.

We have to leave our protection in God's hands. We have to trust, that God will protect. As we sang a moment ago, God will not let us down. God will

protect us. Jesus taught us to pray like this, deliver us from evil. Same as protect us from evil. There's a passage that I like from Psalm 121.

## **Psalm 121**

I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?

My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.

He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.

The Lord will keep  
your going out and your coming in  
from this time on and forevermore.

How beautiful. The Lord will keep you. The Lord will protect you. Don't test God. Just trust God. God will protect you from your heart. Not only will he take care of your basic needs, God will keep your going out and coming in from this time on and forevermore. There's nothing for you to worry about your future. God will be with you. You have big things ahead of you, whether it's wedding or a job, whatever. Don't worry. God will protect you. Don't ever doubt that. That is how you overcome your temptation.

## **Worship and Life**

The third temptation, Satan took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor and said, “all these I’ll give you if you will fall down and worship me.” This is a temptation of who or what we worship. You know our life becomes what we worship, and we become what we worship. We won’t worship anything else but God and God alone. That’s who we are. We won’t worship anything else but God and God alone. When likes changed my life for the whole world, for the splendor of this world, I won’t. Jesus said, “For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?” It is God who gave me life. Not only this life but eternal life. In every conscious moment of our life, we will worship God, nothing else. Even when you’re unconscious, then your soul will worship God. Then your life will come alive. Joy will come alive. Hope will come alive. You will sing and dance with joy. That’s what life is. Life is not just about making. Living. Life is not just about protection. Life is not just about having the splendor of this world. Life is to sing and dance with joy. That’s what life is. Life is about having every moment of your life coming alive. God will make your life rich and meaningful. One life we live, right? I hope that you don’t waste your life because of temptation. Always worry about it, and that it will suck the life out of you. I hope that you get out of temptation and live life fully. Don’t waste the precious life you have. Open your eyes. Come out of temptation and live your life.

# Through it All

March 12, 2017

Exodus 17:1-7

## Dealing with Fear

God gave the Israelites the wilderness experience and, in the wilderness, they confronted. They had to confront their own fear. There was no water. They were helpless. They're about to perish and nobody could help them. Even Moses could not help them. As a matter of fact, no human being was able to help them, they were in the wilderness. There was no water. They were dying of thirst. What can anybody do, so they had to confront fear. I wonder if fear is the most common emotion that we have. And that is an emotion that we have to learn how to deal with. If we don't know how to deal with fear, then our life will be very difficult and timid, and we will live as a victim of fear all the time. And fear does very strange things in our lives.

So, we have to learn to deal with fear. And the Israelites had to confront their own fear and overcoming fear. It's not something that you can learn in a classroom. It's not something that you can read about and intellectually understand it and then deal with that. Fear is something that you have to experience. You have to confront a situation where fear paralyzes you and then you see how much you are victims, or you're controlled by fear. So only through the actual experience of fear, can you deal with the fear, how you can do it. And it is the Israelites in the wilderness, the actual experience of fear and God lead them to experience the fear in those helpless situations. You know, deep inside there, a lot of things within us and you have to learn to train what's inside of us.

We are trained to do a lot of things on the outside. We learned to make a living. We learned to sing. We learned to do a lot of things, raised children, whatever, but sometimes we don't pay attention to what's inside. We don't know how to deal with what's going on within us. There are so many things that are going on when we don't pay attention to that and we become victims of what is going on inside of us. Sometimes we feel great, sometimes we feel down, and we don't even know why we feel good, we don't even know, why we feel so down and how precious it is to encounter a situation where we are trained to deal with what's going on within us.

There are a lot of things buried within us and therefore we need to visit them and sometimes it just comes out without any warning.

## **How We Deal with Fear**

All of a sudden, all these emotions start coming up and you don't know how to deal with them because you never paid attention to them. So, you need to be strengthened enough to be able to handle what's going on inside of us. Last Sunday we had a KSM, a YF meeting. YF are the people in their thirties, forties. They all have little children and they were talking about parenting and how to raise these children and all that. And all of a sudden, the topic turned into sharing their pain, their hurt, their own upbringing, what kind of abuse they receive as they were young and all the hard stuff. Painful stuff came out and they probably didn't even know or didn't have a plan to share when they first came but once one person started sharing, everyone started sharing about their painful history, forgotten memories, buried hurts and pain.

They are still there in you. And sometimes they torment us, and they take us to the dark side. Sometimes once in a while you need to sit down and think, there are things that are buried so deep within you and they control you and they affect you, but we don't even deal with it. We just leave them. We're too scared to deal with them. When they come up, we try to push them into the darkness and then they torment us, they make us sick. They make us not live a healthy life, not make us really good, joyful life. They are always in the back of our minds and then I think the common and the most powerful emotion is a fear. When fear is there, we cannot really function very well. We always go around it rather than dealing with it. The Israelites were not very good at handling their fear. Instead of dealing with it, they let out on Moses and scapegoated Moses. That is the easiest thing to do, scapegoating somebody or blaming somebody is the easiest thing to do, but it's not always the best way or even good way, with your fear, you become hostile. This is what they say. Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?

What's the point of saying that? I mean, they all know that Moses can do anything. They all know that no one can do anything. Now they are in misery, they're scared, and then all they could do was finger point, to finger point at Moses, why did you do that? What good is it by asking that and then they tried to stone Moses.

## Turn to God

That's the natural reaction of human beings. I think that's what human beings all the time do when they encounter fear and this I realized that these are the four steps that human beings normally go through, first, fear that creates anger, and anger creates hatred, and hatred creates violence. This is what's happening all the time when it begins with fear that creates, anger and hatred and ultimately violence. Jedi Grandmaster Yoda, he's my favourite. When Grace was born, she looked like Yoda, so I said to the nurse, "hey she looks like Yoda" and she was laughing, but Yoda said this, "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering." He's a wise guy, no wonder he's a Jedi. Instead of dealing with fear, they just let out their raw emotion and behaved as victims of fear being angry, hateful, and violent. By stoning Moses, what good is it? Temporarily, they might have relieved the pressure that comes from fear, but ultimately, they will kill each other. If they stone Moses, then they would have perished right there, the results would have been worse, but Moses was different. He turned to God. He knew how to deal with fear. He turned to God and God helped them and solved their problem. I think it's wonderful to know God. I mean, if you don't know God, you will not turn to God even if you turn to Him, you won't know what to do. But since Moses knew God, he knew how to turn to God and he received help from Him.

And I hope that all of you know God in an intimate way. So, when a fearful situation comes to you, you know where to go, rather than being angry, hateful, and violent, you just turn to God. And I believe that God will help you. And that is really powerful faith. I hope that all of you learn that skill and then you learn to be trained to deal with fear. Then you'll be able to overcome anything in your situation and you can try anything and then you'll be able to do it fine. If you don't know how to deal with your fear, then you won't be able to. You won't be able to do anything in your life. But once you know how to deal with your fear, then you'll be able to do almost anything. There's nothing for you to worry about, but in life situations, sometimes a fearful situation come health problem, financial problem, job problem, relational problem. When you have children, you have a lot of issues that come up and they make you really scared, fearful. But once you know how, when you're trained to deal with your fear, then you'll be able to handle your life well. Otherwise, you will make mistakes of destroying your life. Because fear does very strange things. It can be scary what fear can



do in your life. But once you know how to deal with fear, you'll be able to persevere, and you'll be able to come out stronger than ever before.

## **Fear into Hospitality**

Once I attended a roundtable discussion on black issues in Toronto, mostly black people and I was invited to participate in the discussion. And the guest speaker came from Jamaica. He grew up in a small village in Jamaica among 10 siblings. And he said, "You know, poverty was not a problem for us. Rather, poverty was our lifestyle. Life was difficult, but we were very happy." Instead of living out his fear, he turned fear into a positive lifestyle. After all that suffering, he said he became a person wrestling not only with his own problems but rather with others' problems. So, he learned to wrestle with other people's problems rather than focusing on his problems. He turned fear into a very positive lifestyle of helping other people. I still remember what is said during the closing worship service. This is what he said, "We are the product of hostile history, but we are going to change it from hostility to hospitality. Have you talked about hospitality before?"

The Israelites learned in the wilderness, and they were trained to turn fear, not into hostility. They learned that it is not good to turn fear into hostility. That's why they wrote this book. They wrote it so that their children may remember we made a mistake as parents and your children, I want you to hear this story so don't make the same mistakes. We turned fear into hostility, but for you, read this story and don't turn fear into hostility. They learned that they should not scapegoat anybody because of fear, don't scapegoat anyone because of fear. How often we scapegoat other people, innocent, helpless victims. We scapegoat them because of our fear. We turn all our attention to those and scapegoat them. The world is teaching fear, constantly they tell you that you have to be scared. They kind of brainwash you with fear. I hope that we don't listen to that teaching, live life not because of fear, but because of faith and love.

## **Turn to God**

Don't love God. Don't believe in God because of fear. Fear of going to hell or fear of fear of punishment, believe in God because of love. We do a lot of things because of fear and they make us small and small and small. I hope that you can overcome fear and become a bigger person because

you deserve that. The Israelites learned that they should turn to God as Moses did. Sometimes you feel helpless and hopeless, and fear starts rising from the depth. Don't let fear control you and paralyze you. Don't blame others. Don't finger point at others. Don't turn fear into anger and violence. Turn to God. In God, overcome your fear. Jesus said "in the world, you may have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." That's what Jesus said. He has overcome the fear.

If Jesus was filled with fear, he could not have done what he did, he was not scared of the cross. He was not scared of the fear. That's why he told us, you want to follow me? Take up your cross. In other words, embrace your fear. Overcome it and follow me. Only then you can be my disciple. Once you overcome fear, you'll be a different person. Just a few days ago, a Korean president was impeached. The whole country is in total mess and chaos. They are in tremendous fear. I hope that they don't become victims of fear, they may not turn fear into hostility. I pray that they may turn fear into creative, constructive discussion, and come out of it more powerfully than ever before. My friends, there are a lot of things going on in the world, but don't let them fear you, but be strong and courageous and turn to God. God will show you what to do.

# The Perishable Body puts on the Imperishability

April 16, 2017

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

## The Realm of Faith

Today, on this day, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also celebrate our own resurrection. We do believe that death is not the end of our life journey. We believe that there is resurrection after death. The resurrection is not in the realm of knowledge. The resurrection is in the realm of faith, so I don't reject everything that I don't understand. There are a lot of things that I don't understand in life, but I don't reject everything that I don't understand. I believe that there is such a thing as mystery. Mystery is a reality beyond your understanding. It is a reality beyond what you can comprehend with your limited knowledge. I do believe that there is such a thing as mystery and the resurrection is in the realm of mystery, so it is not in the realm of knowledge, it is in the realm of faith.

St Paul also said that the resurrection was a mystery. He said this: "I'll tell you a mystery. We will not all die, but we will all be changed". It was a mystery to Paul. He could not explain how resurrection happens. There's no explanation of how, but that is what he realized. It is in mystery, but he firmly believed that that death was not the final destination. The people who did not like Jesus killed him thinking that death will end everything. The best weapon they had was death, so they believed that if they brought death to Jesus, then everything will be over—end of it. But Jesus's death was only the beginning of the whole movement. It was not the end of it. The whole movement of Jesus actually began from the moment Jesus died. So, Jesus' death was only the beginning, not the end. Yes, Jesus helplessly died. At least that was what people thought. On the surface, he just died helplessly. But if you only see that picture, you only see half-truth. On the surface, on the outside, he died helplessly, but deep inside of Jesus, there was a powerful thing going on. There was conviction within Jesus' heart and Jesus' mind. On the surface he looked like a helpless victim, but deep inside there was tremendous conviction within Jesus. That's the key.

## Release of God's Power

Jesus died totally entrusting himself in God's hands. He didn't just die, He died believing that God will ultimately bring victory. That was Jesus' faith: God will ultimately bring victory. He knew that he himself was helpless, but God was not helpless. Through His helpless death, as He believed, God's power was released. God's power, true power was released when Jesus died, the kind of death that Jesus had, that death released God's power.

So, Jesus' death released the life of God. Jesus died with faith in the power of God's life. He did not just die, but his death was with conviction. The conviction that the life God had brought to this world will never be destroyed. Life is more powerful than the power of death. And Paul saw that in Jesus' death, he said, death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, Oh, death is your victory? Where Oh, death is your sting, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus' ministry was very unique. His ministry was ultimately victory over death. Nothing else. His ministry was not just helping people. Jesus' Ministry was not just building the church. Jesus' Ministry was ultimately having victory over death. Nothing in the world can claim victory over death. In that way, Jesus' ministry was very, very unique. That's what he wanted to do. Claim victory over death. Even the most powerful power does not have power over death. It will kneel before death in submission. Ultimately, the most powerful power in the world cannot overcome death, but Jesus' death released the power of life and that life was stronger than death.

That's why He did it through the cross. There's no other reason that He did it through the cross because there is no other way to do it without the cross. He didn't use any power of the world. He didn't use money. He didn't use power. He didn't use fame. He didn't use popularity. He didn't use any of that. He only used the cross. All other people expected that Jesus, maybe he will use power in the world. He could do that. He had power to do a miracle. He did have a lot of power, but he didn't use any of his power, he chose to cross. Why? Only power that can overcome death is the cross, not any power in the world. That's what I believe. Life is more powerful than death. Love is more powerful than hatred. Faith is more powerful than doubt. Hope is more powerful than despair.

## Choose Life Over Death

What is more powerful? Think about it. I do believe that life is more powerful than death. We'll always have to believe that life is more powerful than death. Love is more powerful than doubt. Hope is more powerful than despair. Faith is more powerful than doubt. So whenever you come across the decision, hope or despair, which one are you going to choose? Love or hatred? Which one are you going to choose? Which one is more powerful? I believe that life, love, faith, hope these things are more powerful. I will always choose these things. These things look weak in the world. People don't think that these, these are powerful. 'Love- how come it is powerful?' They will wonder, but I do believe that these are the ones that release life. That's why Jesus chose these things and the cross means all of that. The cross is to die with a conviction that life is more powerful than death. St Paul said, therefore that's the conclusion of the resurrection. "Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." What you do with love, faith and hope will not be in vain. They will bring the power of life to your life.

Power of this world is not powerful enough. Victory over death. It looks like it is powerful, but it's not powerful enough to bring life over death. If you follow the power of this world, ultimately you end up with weak power which cannot claim victory over death, but if you take the cross, the cross will bring the true power of resurrection. I would like to quote Jesus' word lastly. Think about this is lifestyle that Jesus taught us. "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour" (John 12: 24-26). That is the cross and in that cross, there is hidden the secret power of life. Happy Easter. And on this day, always think about choose life over death, choose love over hate, choose faith over doubt. Choose hope over despair; ultimately God will bring about true resurrection in your life.

# Run but don't Run Away

June 4, 2017

Galatians 6:9

## Hitting a Wall

The purpose of inner voice is for people to reflect on good thought every morning. It takes only five minutes to read if you want to read it, but if you want to think about it the whole day, you can use it to meditate on it the whole day. So, it's a very short meditation, so far I have about 120 subscribers and so if you are interested in it, some people use it quite effectively and spiritually, they tell me that every morning they read it either on the GO train or bus or just read it quickly and then think it over for the whole day. So if you are interested in it, go to the website. The first one has instructions, so you can read the instruction for the first one, and you can see today's June fourth, so continuously 365 days a year you will be able to get it. Today I like to talk about giving up because these days I see a lot of people give up too easily. I like to think about giving up. Giving up is an easy way out. Scripture, Galatians six, nine. "So, let us not grow weary in doing what is right for we will reap at harvest time if we do not give up." Very short passage. So I was thinking about giving up. Giving up is an easy way out and we can always give up, that's the easiest way to deal with our problems. Just walk away. That's easiest, but it should be the last. That's not the best way to deal with our problems every time. I don't think, if that is our lifestyle, then we can never achieve anything. We'll always give up in the middle of doing things.

We may start well, but we won't be able to finish it. Don't you realize that whatever you do, you always hit the wall, don't you? I mean, whatever I do, I always hit the wall, plateau. It doesn't get any better whether you play sports at a certain point, you don't get any better. Even some great players, they go through a slump, and then they just don't get out of it for a year or two, or if you're an artist, your imagination is kind of fixed and limited, you cannot do anything any better. So, I know this sculptor and he got an award. He was just going crazy, every day, he's reading all kinds of books to get inspiration, but nothing comes. Also, writers, they often tell me that when they see a blank page, they get really scared because nothing good comes.

## **Break the Wall**

Even in a relationship, we hit a wall at a certain point. Our relationship doesn't go anywhere, and the wall is so high and so strong that it makes us feel so helpless and hopeless. We feel so powerless and small in, in front of this big, huge wall. That's why we give up and turn around and we say to ourselves, I have no power within me to break that wall and I have no choice but to give up. That is a logical conclusion. That is a logical conclusion and sensible conclusion, maybe that's why I believe that we cannot live just simply by the logic. We always faced the wall that is too high and too strong. No matter what we do, we can logically explain why we gave up and we can logically explain well, why we stopped running. No matter how logical that may be, that's not what I want.

That's not what I need. I don't need to explain logically why I gave up. I'm not interested in why I gave up. I'm not interested in a logical explanation of why I have given up. I believe that people have become victims of their own logic. They don't see beyond that. Their own logic gives justification for giving up too easily. They have a very good reason why they give up, but they become a slave to their failure and to their own logic, they become victims of their own limitation, so I don't think it is good to simply live by logic. It doesn't get us too far. I want to live by faith. I want to embrace the mysterious aspect of my life by faith. Saint Paul said "we walk by faith, not by sight. We walk by faith, not just logic." Hebrews writer said, "now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Whenever you hit the wall, that is when you should turn to faith. Whenever you feel helpless and hopeless, I hope that you can try to turn to faith. Don't just try to break the wall. Sometimes when you try to break the wall, you feel helpless and hopeless. Your weaknesses will overwhelm you. You will be exhausted and then soon give up.

## **Faith Opens the Door**

When you turn to faith, you will see something more than the wall. You know this image came to me when I was writing this sermon; There is a door on the wall. Somehow this image is given to; my door on the wall. When you see your wall with faith, you can see the door on the wall. You don't need to break the wall. You just go through the door through faith, you'll be able to see the open door. You know, Jacob's life was always running away from the beginning. He had to run away from Israel, all his life

he ran away. At the end of his journey, he could not run away from his life problems anymore. He had to face his own life challenges, so this time he decided not to run away. He decided to face it. That's why he wrestled all night with this unknown figure. To Jacob, the wall of his life was Esau, but he didn't have to break the wall. He didn't have to destroy Esau to move on. Mysteriously, Esau turned around and accepted Jacob. He never expected that. That was an open door to Jacob. On the wall, there was an open door.

We don't know how our life will turn out. We don't know how our problems get solved. We don't know what the future holds for us. The important thing is to believe that what I'm doing is worthwhile. I'm doing good things. It is good work that I do while I do ministry, many times I have experienced the wall, but every time I have believed that what I'm doing is worthwhile, it is valuable, and God always, every time he showed me the way. So, it's just important that you believe that what you're doing is valuable, important worth it. It reminds me of what Isaiah said "I am about to do a new thing. Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I'll make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, away in the wilderness, the rivers, in the desert". There is no way in the wilderness, there is no river in the desert, so there's no door on the wall. So, rivers are the way, they are like doors, St Paul said, "So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time if we don't give up.". Yes, I believe that if we believe all we do is right, then we should not give up. God will show us the way and he will. We will. We will reap when the right time comes." Second Chronicle said the same thing, but as for you, be strong and do not give up for your work will be rewarded.

## Run

You do a good thing, you don't give up and ultimately, you'll reap rewards when the right time comes. Run, but when you face the wall, don't run away. Turn to God, have faith in God. You may not have the power to break the wall, but you may be able to see the opening. As you look at your own life, didn't you experience that one moment in your life where it goes nowhere? You're stuck. There's no way out. I felt in many times, there's no way out. I'm stuck here. I'm so helpless and hopeless, but somehow there was an opening. I don't know how that opening came about, and I was able to go through that opening and life opened up. My friend's life is like that. Sometimes you feel you're stuck. You go nowhere, your life goes nowhere. You look around, there's no way out, but with faith, you will see a small,



small opening opened up for you, and when you go through that opening, the whole new world opens up for you. I do believe that there's a faith journey you cannot see that by logic alone, only by faith. You'll be able to see that opening, then your life will open up. Otherwise, you'll be stuck in your own situation. I hope to be all have eyes of faith so thou life moves on beyond the wall that we hit.

# Dream Calls

July 16, 2017

Genesis 41:15-16

## Life Must Be Lived Forward

We all need dreams to live a meaningful life. When you have dreams you tend to look ahead. That's what dreams do. In life, you've got to always look ahead. You shouldn't just look back, and you shouldn't just drown in your own daily living, worries and anxieties and things like that. But I believe that a good life always looks ahead, you see what's coming. Kierkegaard said this, "life can be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards." I think that's a very profound statement. When you look back, you can learn a lot of things, but your life should be lived forwards. To live your life forwards, you have to look ahead. To look ahead, you need to have dreams. Dreams help you do that.

## Dreams Are Beyond Our Reach

There's a characteristic of dreams. You have to understand. Dreams are not easily reachable. Dreams are often beyond our reach. In that sense dreams are very different from plans. Plans are also about what's ahead of you, but you can control them. Often times, dreams are beyond your control. You cannot even imagine the result of your dreams, and many times you feel that it is impossible to achieve dreams because it's so far ahead of you.

Imagine the dream of Martin Luther King Jr., where you're judged not by skin color, but by your character? How can you imagine a world where there is no racism, where everyone just lives peacefully? Imagine the dream of Isaiah, for example. Isaiah said this, "lions and lambs lying together, and the little kids will put their hands into the den of vipers and no one will be hurt." How can you imagine a world where no one hurts each other, where everyone just loves each other and helps each other? How can you imagine the dream of Isaiah? It is beyond our reach.

## **Why Do We Dream?**

It is very difficult to imagine our dream. So, we have this question. When dreams are so hard to be reached or realized. Why do you have dreams? Regardless, dreams will not be realized. Why do you have dreams? Maybe that's why many people find dreams futile, no use, and they say negative things about dreams. Living in clouds, vanity, lots of ideas, but no action, that kind of thing, so they give up on dreams altogether. I think dreams are very important still. Dreams are hard to imagine, and it's hard to be realized, but there is power in dreaming. You know what that power is? Dreams have power to draw your life to that dream. That is the power. When you have dreams, your life automatically is drawn to them. Dreams are like a jet stream where they control the direction and movement of the wind. In the same way dreams set and control the direction of your life, dreams shape who you are, and dreams shape your life. That is what dreaming does. Even though it's not easily accessible, easily reachable, dreams continuously move you into certain directions. If you have no dreams, it's almost like living without direction of life. When you have dreams, then you will have clear direction in your life.

## **Dreams are Given by God**

I also realized that dreams are not something that I can make up. I can come up with all kinds of dreams, but they are doctrines, they are vanity. I realized that real dreams are given to you. It's not something that you make. Dreams are not what I choose. Dreams are given by God. Dreams have a lot to do with your relationship with God. When we think about dreams, we can think about Joseph, dreams are not luxuries, dreams can be quite difficult.

This morning I was talking with a KSM member, a young woman and she said, just this morning on the way to church she talked to her husband about her dream. "My dreams are luxury. I'm going through so much. So, dreams are luxury." But dreams are not luxuries. Dreams can make your life very difficult.

Like in Joseph's case, if he didn't have dreams, he didn't have to leave his home, but because of his dreams he was hated by his brothers and they even tried to kill him, and then they sent him away into Egypt. Ultimately, because of his dream, he was able to save his family and established the

foundation of the nation. Israel. That's what Joseph's dreams were all about. Joseph believed that it's not something that he came up with, that dream was a dream he received from God. So often, there are a lot of dreams that you make up, but there are dreams that God gives you and you know that has a lot to do with what God wants to do with your life.

## **Dreams Are Within You**

As we enter into deeper relationships with God, this is what I realize. Dreams are moving within you. Dreams are being formed within you and dreams are given birth within you. These dreams have everything to do with what God wants to do through you. It is important to think about our dreams because they shape your existence. You all have dreams within you. They're just not discovered yet, but you all have dreams within you. When you met God, dreams were created already, deeply buried within you and maybe not discovered, but you all have dreams. Or maybe you put them aside as unimportant because you're so busy living your life.

When you sit down and carefully think about them, you'll be able to find dreams within you. Don't try to force your dreams but listen to your authentic existence and dreams will come to you, they will come alive. Then you will be able to live out those dreams and you, your life will move forward.

## **Dreams are for Others**

Also, sometimes, dreams, even if you find them, there are many obstacles and challenges for these dreams being realized, but just because of challenges and difficulties, do not throw away your dreams, they are precious. Just because life is hard and difficult, do not throw away your dreams, or do not replace your dreams with your ambition. Personal ambition is just for yourself, dreams are for other people. Dreams are for the community. Dreams are for the country. All these great people had dreams. Martin Luther King Jr. and Isaiah, all these people had dreams. As they met God these dreams were created within them and they lived out those dreams. No matter how difficult life was to them they lived out those dreams. They are great people.

Just because your life is busy and you're having a hard time right now, don't throw away your dreams. Sit down and carefully think about what

your dreams are, especially for young people. Most of you are young. Don't ever throw away your dreams. Start learning to practice dreaming every day. Practice dreaming. Go and buy a notebook. If you don't have money come to me. I'll buy you a notebook. Buy a notebook and start writing down what your dreams are, what your dreams for life are, and then live them out one by one. Wonderful things will happen. You will start seeing how God works in your life through your dreams.

## **Let Us Rise**

Life without dreams is like life without hope. My friends let us rise from our sleep and let us live our dreams. Let us bring out those dreams that you used to have and live out those dreams. You will be able to do wonderful things to each other, for the world. Yes, the world that we live in is very harsh, difficult. A lot of fights, animosity, division, all of these things are what we are experiencing every day, but we have noble dreams. Noble dreams for justice, noble dreams for peace, noble dreams for harmony and reconciliation.

Let us humbly come before God and ask God to give us dreams so that we may live out the wonderful life that God has given to us. Dreams are a gift from God to you.

# Courage to Choose

August 27, 2017

Matthew 7:13-14

## **Your Uniqueness Is Courage**

Today is a kind of graduation service for those who are graduating from high school and also from elementary school. Graduation in other words is commencement. Commencement meaning 'it begins', so you begin a new chapter of your life. So, I have kind of chosen this passage for you to meditate on as you read the scripture. I'm going to talk about the narrow road. I think the narrow road is not necessarily what we automatically think. We think it means to choose a hard and difficult life.

Maybe there may be hard and difficult life, but narrow road for me is your own unique life that you choose. You follow no one else but your own authentic existence. I'm not talking about just career, but also your existence. What is your unique existence in this world? I think we all are created uniquely, therefore we're supposed to live a unique life. Sometimes people think 'I'm going to be in this profession or that profession', that doesn't necessarily guarantee that you're living a unique life. In everyday living your way of thinking, your way of doing things, your way of treating others, your way of thinking of God makes your life. You need to have your unique personality, your own person. And that is what is important.

If you ask a lot of old people. they all say, "I just thought that that is the life you're supposed to live. So, I did everything other people did, but after 40 years, 50 years and kind of wondering whether I chose the right path. When I was young, I didn't think too much about it. So, I just chose whatever is given to me by my parents, from friends. And I just followed it but now that I think about it, I ask, am I living my life or am I living somebody else's life?" So, it is very important to take the narrow road that your own unique life chooses. It doesn't matter what age you are, I think that is something that we all need to think about. I do believe that to have to choose the narrow road or to make a choice you need courage.

You may wonder what courage do we need? I just, I choose things, but I think you need courage to make conscious choices instead of just living out

what is given to you. I think you need courage to choose your own path. Not many people have that, necessarily. You have to have a very strong character to be able to choose your own path, not the path that other people are following. I personally think that you need lots of courage to make choices because often we let our circumstances dictate our lives. We let our circumstances dictate our thinking and the way we view the world. Making a choice in our life is a basic human right. Being able to choose for myself is a basic human right. In some countries that have dictators, the people don't have a choice, but we live in a free world, so we have choice, but yet we don't exercise the right to choose. We don't exercise choice. Living in a very free world we let circumstances dictate us so that we don't have to make any choices, so we live our lives without making choice for ourselves. I think that is a basic human right. Everything we do, we should do it with our conscious choice. "Yes, this is what I want, and I want to choose that. I have nobody to blame because it's my choice."

But many times, we don't choose and then we turn around and say, "Oh, my parents told me to do this" or "Oh, there's so and so did this," or "At that time, all my friends did it, so I did it..." so that it's not your fault. Ultimately, you make a choice. You're accountable for that choice. You have a responsibility for the choice that you make. And maybe this why a lot of people don't make choices because they are not courageous enough to take the responsibility, to take the blame. But making a choice takes courage and making a choice is a basic human right. A Christian writer said, "Destiny is a matter of choice, not chance." Your destiny will be decided by your choice, not by chance.

## **Power In Your Choice**

There's a professional baseball player, Jim Abbott. He used to play for the California Angels, New York Yankees, Chicago White Sox, Milwaukee Brewers, and all of these famous teams he played, and Sports Illustrated once I praised him as a pitcher who can throw 90 miles per hour. These days, a lot of people do that, but at that time, that was kind of a unique and was a big deal. Since he was young, he wanted to play baseball, but his circumstances were not very good. He really desired to play baseball and to be in the major leagues, but he was born without a right hand. Think about it. You don't have a right hand. You only have a left hand, but since he was young he wanted to be a baseball player. What do people say? What do his parents say? 'No, Jim, maybe there's some other things that

you could do well with one hand' or other friends may say he is being ridiculous. But he wanted to play baseball so much and at the end of it he made it. He was able to play baseball in the Major League and he was even praised in Sports Illustrated.

He chose to go for it. All of the other people said "Don't," but he chose to go for it. He said this, "I've been blessed with pretty good left arm and a not so good right arm". He didn't have a hand. Jim Abbott summarized his life in this way. "I had to learn to do it with one hand because that's all I had". You make choices with all you have. Don't say that, "If I had money, I would have chosen that". That's just an excuse. He chose even with one arm to play baseball.

Your choice is a powerful thing that you can exercise in your life to live your own unique, authentic life. Our destiny is decided not by chance, but by choice. Jesus said to choose the narrow road. He said, enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life. And there are few who find it. Only people who choose the narrow road will find life. Your own authentic life. People who just follow everybody else. You don't find your own life. Entering through the narrow gate means we live with our choices. Many people take the wide road because they don't want to choose.

Choose to find your own life since you're young. Don't delay it. Whatever you do even, choose to play. If you're going to play, don't play just because other people forced you to play. You choose to play. You choose to study. You choose what you want in your life. From when you're young, you have to learn to make choices. Don't blame your circumstances. In any circumstance you can exercise your basic human right to choose. Jim Abbott did not give up his right to choose just because he had only hand. He exercised his right to choose. Even in that limited circumstance, one hand was all he had. People who did not make a choice in their lives will live without empowerment. They will live without vision. They'll live without passion. They will not make their best effort because it's not something that they chose. They will do mediocre work, live a mediocre life. They will just float along with the rest of the people



## About Your Choice...

But my friends, remember this: to make a choice, you have to know who you are. You have to know what God's will is. You have to know your circumstances. Making a choice without thinking is not making a choice to me. It is a lazy choice, but to me it is not even a choice. To make the right choice, you have to think hard. You have to meditate upon yourself, upon God's will and upon your circumstances, and then make your choice. So, to live a life of conscious choice, you need to be a thinker. He had no choice but to be a thinker. You need to be able to discern a ray of light that penetrates through the darkness. You'll be able to see that light. You should be able to hear the whispering voice amidst all the noise around you. You will hear that voice, a very clear voice, and you'll see a ray of light. When you start making choices in your life, you can see the light. You can hear the voice. Only then we can make choices. Without seeing it, without hearing it, you cannot make choices.

Even if you make a choice, it doesn't mean anything. In life we need conviction. Seeing the light and hearing the voice is conviction. You need to have conviction to live. One life we live, we live with conviction. St. Paul heard that voice. He lived a mediocre life. He lived a good life following the law and all the good things that other people said is good, but once he met Jesus Christ, all the things that he thought was good were not good anymore. He found his own voice in his life. Jesus' disciples, what did they discover when they met Jesus? Conviction about life. I thought that was life. Just doing the work and then the fishing and all that. If I have more fish than I'm happy, I thought that was everything about life. But after meeting Christ, they found conviction in life. That's what they found after meeting Christ. They found the secret of life in Jesus' teaching.

One more thing about choices. First, you have to live with a choice. Second, you have to know to make a choice. Third is, when you start making choices, you will make mistakes. Definitely you will make mistakes. If you don't make choices, you won't make mistakes. If you start making choices, you will make mistakes and those mistakes will make you feel really, really bad because you made a wrong choice. You will all go through that ugly feeling in your life when you start making choices. That's why a lot of people don't make choices because they don't like that kind of ugly feeling.

But instead of not making choices, learn to embrace your own mistakes and even that bad feeling. Don't be scared of making mistakes. We all make mistakes. People who make conscious choices, you have to be strong. Okay, I made mistakes, but my life is not over. I'm going to attack again, and I am going to confront it again. Don't be scared of mistakes. We faulty human beings always make mistakes. Our mistakes kind of make a judgment on who we are and that's why we don't like it, but through mistakes you learn. This is what Michael Jordan said, "I've missed more than more than 9,000 shots in my life. In my career, I've lost almost 300 games and 26 times I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed". 26 times. He counted. In other words, he felt really, really bad. That's why he's saying that 'I failed over and over and over again in my life'. We are talking about Michael Jordan and then he said, as I quoted before to you, "I can accept failure. Everyone, everyone feels as something, but I cannot accept not trying". Why don't you try something with your life? What are you so scared of? Do something.

Do what God wants you to do. Don't just pay attention to your parents. Don't just pay attention to your friends. Pay attention to God, and of course a lot of times God speaks through parents, so I'm not saying that don't listen to your parents. Often, God speaks through parents too, but ultimately learn to listen to God. And to do something worthwhile, something beautiful, that can only come by conscious choice. Enter through the narrow gate.

# Three Things about Anxiety

September 10, 2017

Matthew 6:25-33

## Anxiety Within Us

Anxiety is a common problem. We all worry about life. We worry about school, about our jobs, about our children and about our health. Sometimes, even when we don't have anything to worry about, we still worry. It's kind of strange that I have nothing to worry about and that makes me worry. One comedian said, "You know, there is a day when everything goes so well and that drives me crazy". I think these comedians know very well about life. Yes, when there's nothing to worry about, you start to think oh my goodness, why don't I have anything to worry about? and we start worrying about. Sometimes we have this superstition. If we have something to worry about, that won't happen to me at the kind of superstition because often what we worry about does not get realized, so worries always follow us like a shadow. It is not a good feeling when you constantly have this dark cloud over your head. Anxiety is a psychological problem, but I believe that it is a spiritual subject to deal with. We need spiritual disciplines to overcome our anxiety. We need to deal with what is going on in our heart to deal with anxiety and dealing with what's going on in our heart is a future subject.

## Basic Needs

Myron Augsburger, a Mennonite scholar, summarized anxiety in three words, "Irreverent, irrelevant and irresponsible", irreverent because there is no respect for God. Into this scripture, Jesus said not to worry about and he gave the main reason. The main reason was because God will take care of you, don't worry. Simple. God will take care of you. He said, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which do you believe that? You are of more value than those things, lilies of the field and birds of the air. If you believe that, I mean they don't do anything, but God takes care of them. If you believe that you're more value than them, why do we worry? God will take care of your basic needs. What Jesus is saying is we worry because we don't believe that God will take care of our needs. We should not worry about what we shall eat or what we shall drink or about our body, what will we wear. These are important things, but also,

these are basic necessities of life. Jesus saying that Jesus will take care of your basic needs. We need to trust that God will take care of our basic needs and we need to experience that in life. I've experienced this many time in my life. All my life, I've lived not with much money. Even when I was in the beginning of ministry and when I was a student, I lived with just the basics. My salary was \$700 and then rent was \$700. After that, what do I do? how do I survive? and that's how I lived, but even at that time, everything was all right. God is taking care of our basic needs. All this time, if we cannot entrust our basic needs in God's hands, we cannot entrust anything to God. There is a big difference between the people who entrust their basic needs to God and people who don't. There's a quality difference. If you don't entrust your basic needs in God's hands, you can never become a bigger person. You will always worry about what to eat, what to wear. You can never become a bigger thinking. You'll be enslaved to your fear, so to fight against anxiety, you have to have spiritual discipline to entrust your basic needs in God's hands. Then your life will be enriched, and you will have confidence in life. You can go beyond worrying about your basic needs. You will see bigger things in life; so, about your job, about your daily living, God will take care of your basic needs. Don't worry about it and do something beyond your basic needs.

## Why Worry?

Second, it is irrelevant to worry about things. In other words, it's no use. Worrying does not do any good to you. Jesus said, "can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?", you cannot do anything productive by worrying about it. Sometimes by worrying about your problems, you make the problems worse. You ruined your health both physically and mentally. It is a waste of time and waste of your energy. Spend your time and energy for the things that you can do something about it. Don't spend that on worrying about your life, by worrying about them you get absorbed deeper into your problems and you'll be affected both physically and mentally, so it's no use. Then what do we do? What are spiritual disciplines? The first one is you entrust your basic needs in God's hands, in second spiritual, a display because it is no use. What do we do? Whenever you worry, turn that into prayer. Make that as your discipline. If there is a subject that you're worrying about, instead of worrying about it, turn that into prayer. There's an old hymn, a sweet hour of prayer is a beautiful hymn. Let me read the verses, "sweet hour of prayers sweet hour of prayer that calls me from a world of care, and bids me and my father's

throne. Make all my wants and wishes known. In seasons of distress and grief. My soul has often found relief, our cast on him, my every care and wait for the sweet hour of prayer, our cast on him, my every care and way for these sweet hour of prayer. That's what prayer is, when you turn your anxiety into prayer, you can defeat your anxiety problem. When you have an anxiety attack, turn that into prayer. Your prayer will become real and you will do a lot of prayer too.

## **Becoming Prayer People**

We all worry about things, but every time when we turn that into prayer, you'll become prayer people not worriers, and I want all of you to become prayer people. Worries and anxieties do nothing for you, but prayer brings miracles. When you worry about things, nothing will happen, but when you turn that into prayer, you'll experience God's miracles. That's why Saint Paul said this, "Do not worry about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication". This is Saint Paul's spiritual discipline. Whenever he worries about things, he turned that into prayer and supplication with Thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. When you turn your worries into prayer, God's peace will guard your heart. You will become strong. Your heart will become strong. That's a miracle to me. You don't have feeble heart anymore. You'd have a very strong, peaceful heart. Your life will change.

## **Worth Behind Worrying**

Third, it is irresponsible to worry, in what ways is it responsible? Worrying to me is escapism. Worry is escapism. It is a way of escaping your problems. Instead of dealing with challenges of life, you hide behind the anxiety, even though we know that worrying does nothing to deal with our challenges because worrying is easier and safer then dealing with problems, we choose to worry so we hide in that way It is irresponsible. When life's troubles attack us, we believer's do not sit on our problems or hide behind our worries. Jesus said, conclusively, do not worry about things in life, but seek first the Kingdom of God and everything else will be alright. That's Jesus principle. When challenges of life attack you instead of worrying about it, seek first the Kingdom of God and everything else will be alright. Focus on good things that you can do for other people. Don't waste your life worrying about your problems. Focus your eyes on the things that

you can do for other people. Worries have no power. They have no weight. We just empower them. We just give them the power, but worrying itself has no power, unless you give it, give the power to the worry. And when worries come, you do this “blow it out, try it”. When worries come just blow out, come on worries have no power. No weight, it just goes off when you do that. Worries contained in your head, mind, just shake it away. They have no power whatsoever to do anything to you.

## **Preventing Worry**

But always focus on your heart and mind. What can I do for other people? People who are in difficult situations, people who are in need, that should be your agenda every day. Not on your problems. If you seek first the Kingdom of God, everything else will be alright. That’s how we fight against anxiety. I hope that you cultivate these spiritual disciplines to fight against your worries and anxieties. So, these three things; first, entrust your basic needs in God’s hands, two, turn your worries into prayer, three, focus on good things you can do for God and for others. I hope that this will help you to deal with your own worry problems.

# What is Our Idol?

October 22, 2017

Exodus 32:1-14

## What is the Golden Calf?

This passage, at first, I had a problem because the passage we read today has a very foreign concept to all of us, a golden calf. We don't make golden calves anymore. We don't make idols with a golden calf anymore. We are too sophisticated, I mean, they're still idols. I'm sure they're still idols, but we don't make a golden calf and say that is my God. I haven't seen anyone who makes a golden calf and believes that it is their God, but the Israelites believed that this golden calf would lead them out of their miserable life and this is what they say. "And they said, these are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." Strange, isn't it? Look at the passage very carefully. Don't you find this strange? The golden calf wasn't there when they came out of Egypt, but they believed that the golden calf brought them up out of Egypt. That's very strange to me. It doesn't make sense, but they believed it anyway and I realize big belief is quite powerful and you want to believe something doesn't matter whether it makes sense or not. Once you decide to believe you will just believe it. We can even rewrite history and some people call it alternative facts. That was what the golden calf did for them. The golden calf made them believe that he brought them out of Egypt.

The power of the golden calf. What is the golden calf to us? I think it is me. That's what the golden calf is, narcissism, self-centeredness. Even then, the golden calf was not their idol and they knew it. The Israelites knew it very well. The golden calf was just a materialization of what was in their heart. They didn't believe in the golden calf. They believed in themselves. The real idols were themselves. The golden calf was just a visible sign of what was in their heart. What did the golden calf do for them? It didn't do anything. It didn't give manna, it didn't give them protection from the enemies and healing, but it gave them fantasy, comfort, a sense of peace. It made their make belief, real. When they saw the golden calf, they kind of felt better. They felt that everything will be all right from now as long as we have this golden calf, but it was only a fantasy in their own minds. Yes, the golden calf gave them fantasy in the wilderness, and they needed it. It gave

them a false hope. Don't we have a fantasy about ourselves? We think we can control our own destiny. We think we have so much power to create our own path. Who brought us to the brink of total destruction? We are the ones who created the nuclear weapons, and yet we say to ourselves, we can bring all the good on our own. We created this kind of disaster, monster, that can eradicate humanity, all the people, and yet we say to ourselves, we can create our own path, we have enough power to make our life better. Do we really make our lives better?

## **We are Not on Our Own**

We depend absolutely on ourselves. That's the only thing that we know we only depend on ourselves. That's why when we do everything well, we feel like our lives would be alright and there's a promising future. When my life is going well, we feel like our lives would be great in the future. When we are capable and smart enough to handle our problems, we feel that we can handle almost anything well, but when we are not doing very well and when we feel our powerlessness and when we cannot handle our problems with our brain, we get deeply discouraged and depressed because everything depends on me. Every single thing depends on me and my future depends on me. Happiness depends on me. That's why we live with this eternal anxiety. What if I can't? Simon sent to parents an article about the anxiety of the youth. Anxieties not just for the adults. Even the young children, they have anxiety problems because everything depends on me. The world taught them to believe themselves and that only created anxiety. The world taught you that you're on your own, so take care of yourself. You're on your own. Nobody's there to help you. You're on your own. Take care of yourself. That's a fantasy. I'm not on my own, my parents helped me, my friends are helping me, my communities, helping me and I have God who cares for me.

We are continuously creating this kind of fantasy that we are on our own and we can take care of ourselves and that gives us only anxiety, narcissism and self-centeredness. That is our golden calf. I think that is so prevalent in our lives, it consumes us. Sometimes we feel like we have all the world in our hands, but soon we feel like we are thrown into the bottom of the darkness. When they said that the golden calf will lead them from now on, what you're really saying was we will dictate from now on our own destiny. Moses, I don't know where he is and God, I don't know where He is. I'll take care of my own destiny and future. The golden calf was a very good tool to hypnotize themselves with their own positive beliefs. We say to



ourselves, “Hey, I have money now. I can take care of my family and myself.” Didn’t you just say to the rich before who thought that I have enough food in my bar so let’s marry and enjoy my life. Jesus said, “your soul will be demanded tonight.” The golden calf cannot make their future. The golden calf cannot make a way for them. My friends, we ourselves cannot create our own path for the future. I believe that God made a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. This is what Isaiah said, “I’m about to do a new thing. Now it springs forth. Do you not perceive it? I’ll make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. I cannot keep myself. It is God who keeps me.” One of my favourite psalms is Psalm 121 and I told KSM members to let us memorize this and maybe ESM too. Memorize this. Let us try to memorize Psalm 121 that is beautiful psalm it goes like this. “I lift up my eyes to the hills from where all my help come. My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He will not let your food be moved. He who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel, will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper. The Lord is your shade at your right hand. The Sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by the night. The Lord will keep you from all evil. He will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and you’re coming in from this time on and forevermore.” Isn’t it beautiful, Huh? No feeling so not even beautiful.

## Reflection

Oh my goodness, it’s a beautiful psalm. So it’s constantly talking about keeping you. I don’t keep myself. It is God who keeps us. It is God who holds the key to your future. It is not you. You don’t have to worry about it just because things do not go well. Don’t be too discouraged. Your future doesn’t depend on you alone. Your God is right there with you. Don’t try to solve your life problems on your own. Trust in God. We have to destroy the idols of narcissism or individuality within us. It’s a fantasy. This world taught you. I can take care of myself. That’s a fantasy to me. When these idols take control of our lives, our lives will not get untangled. Sometimes these days. I mean, I told you, every morning I get up, read New York Times, Washington Times and Globe and Mail, and it’s for two hours I try to read what is going on in the world and I say to myself, we human beings cannot take care of humanity by ourselves. I feel helpless and hopeless many, many times, but I will move on. I’ll continue because I believe that there is God who takes care of the history, who sets a path for our destiny. I asked you a question last week. Do you untangle your life or is your life untangled?

When I look back, so many things, they were not in my control and I don't know how these things were untangled over the years. I'm just thankful to God for taking care of my life and my family and my community. God will be with you on your journey. Trusting God and a new path will be opened up for all of us.

# Be Patient

November 28, 2017

James 5:7-11

## Difficulty of Patience

It's easy to talk about being patient, but it is very hard to practice it. We know very well that nothing in the world can be mastered without patience. Nothing can be done easily to achieve anything good. We go through many hardships and pain and difficulties and also, we experienced a lot of failures. Only after many failures, we achieved a little bit of what we really want to achieve, but just a fraction of it. But even to achieve that, it takes so much patience, much failures, and hardships. So, this is a painful process to master. And that's why we need a patience. There is used to be a very interesting visa commercial. I don't see that anymore. A father is watching a son playing with this board and then the boy writes something and then he shakes it and then the letter is gone, and he writes again.

I don't know what it's called, that little tablet. You write something and then shake it and gone and writes again. And the father goes to his refrigerator and then he sees his bill statement and he takes it and he shakes it and everything becomes a zero and the commercial said, "if life is like that, you don't need a visa, but for everything else you need a visa." I mean, how nice, if our life is that easy as portrayed in the commercial but when I really think about it, I might get boring. If life is like that, if I can get anything I want immediately then I'll get bored. Life is challenging because there are things in life we can never master. If there were a pen that produces a sermon just like that, whenever I use it, sermon just comes out.

Doesn't matter how much thousand, \$10,000. I'll buy it. Life would be so much easier that way. But, come to think of it, if I have that pen, my life may be quite boring. The challenge we need these challenges, these challenges give us something to work for and something to pursue. That's what makes our life exciting. There's something that you cannot just master, something that you cannot just achieve. That's why you're working so hard, but still, you don't get it, and that process itself gives us a little bit of meaning in life. Spiritual life is more exciting because it is hard to master because it's challenging. Spiritual life is very challenging and it's hard to

master. Maybe there's is no such thing as mastering spiritual life. That's why spiritual life is so exciting. Spirituality always takes us beyond our comfort zone.

## **Cultivating a Spiritual Life**

Spirituality takes us always beyond what we can do easily. So, it is very important to be patient in cultivating a spiritual life. Like the farmer who patiently waits for the rain to fall after they planted the seeds. We have to learn to patiently wait for the spiritual change after we put so much effort into it. Israelites had to learn this patience, in the wilderness for 40 years. Maybe that's why God left them there to teach them what patience is all about. For 40 years they have to wait. And early Christians, because of their persecution, they experienced tremendous persecution in the beginning and they had to wait. They always called Maranatha, "come Lord." That's what it means. And they waited and persevered through all that persecution. I mean, it's not that it wasn't their choice. Their environment kind of demanded that from them.

Almost a forced them to be patient. Sometimes you cannot choose our situation, our environment, our life circumstances and just forces us or demand us just to be patient. And the early Christians because they experienced a tremendous persecution, probably they built a muscle, spiritual muscle, muscle of faith. Maybe that's why we still have Christianity after 2000 years later, if the Christianity was established very easily in the beginning, probably we may not even have Christianity now, but right in the beginning, they went through so much persecution and hardship. They build a strong spirituality in the process. So, there is a blessing in disguise. It is hard to take him when he comes, but once you go through it, you become stronger. So, it is a blessing in disguise. We may prefer an easy and comfortable life but who doesn't? But let me tell you, be careful. When your life is too easy and too comfortable, I'll tell you to be careful because you may lose your purpose of living.

You may lose life itself. You may wonder if this is all about life. Just eating well and living well is that it? Sometimes you may get totally disappointed and disillusioned about your life. Faith grows on suffering and struggle. The best food for faith is struggle and suffering. People want to grow fast and when they want to grow fast, hardships, struggle, and suffering seem like the only hindrance. That slows down your growth, but let me tell you, if you

change fast, you change fast. But if you change something, you're back to zero fast. Nothing changes fast. Real change takes time. Real growth happens one step at a time.

## **Make it a Habit**

I believe in the power of doing little things every day. I think that it has tremendous power. If you can do something every day I believe you will see the power of that little thing that you do every day. Ancient Roman poet, Ovid said dripping water hollows out the stone, not through force, both through persistence. Even water can make a hole in the rock when it comes down continuously. Chinese has a word for that too, so I memorized, but I forgot now, sorry. I said it in KSM service and they were like, "wow! How did you know?" Of course, Google. You can get anything from Google except sermon. You know, faith is very simple.

I believe that faith is a good habit. That's what faith is. Good habit. Faith doesn't happen overnight. You can never have faith if you don't have a habit. If you don't have a spiritual habit, doesn't matter how long you been to church, you can never have faith. Faith is a good habit, and many years of spiritual practices produce faith as a result. And having a habit is very powerful. You don't become an alcoholic by one binge drinking, but if you repeat heavy drinking every day, every night, it becomes a habit. And the habit controls you. A good habit is also very powerful. You know, Stephen King who write mostly horror books. I don't read these books much, but one book that he wrote is a just beautiful book, made into a movie, Shawshank Redemption. I'm sure some of you have watched that movie, beautiful movie if you didn't watch it. Stephen King wrote that book and he said, he writes every day, not a single day. He misses. He writes every day, including his birthday and holidays. He has a quota every day, 2000 words until he writes 2000 words he doesn't stop his pen. He writes every day.

Mark Twain said the same thing. The good habit makes a good writer. Being patient doesn't mean that you don't do anything and just wait. Being patient is you're doing something believing that you're doing something worth worthwhile and you believe that someday that will bring the result. So, you patiently keep doing it. That's what waiting is. Waiting is not just sitting down doing nothing. Waiting is you wait for the result because you believe that this is good, and you wait for the result and continue to little thing over and over and over again, even though you don't see the result right away.

That's what waiting is. If there's one thing that you want to do in your life, put that in your daily schedule. Just don't say that I want it. If you really want it, put that in your daily schedule. Anger is a problem. You really want to be free from the anger. Put that in the daily schedule. A complaint is a problem. Then put that in the daily schedule. For example, write a Thanksgiving journal every day. Okay. From today I'm going to write five items that I'm thankful for. Every day you write down why you're thankful for. You keep doing that and your complaint will disappear. Someday, you'll be a thankful person. Today's the last Sunday of November already and next Sunday will enter into the last month of this year and then from January you'll have a new resolution. But start now, from January to late. Think about what you want to achieve in 2018 and prepare yourself from now and start it. And then if you're a success this year in 2018, the next year, 2019 add another habit. So, every year add one habit at a time, what you want to do, what is really important to you. Do that and your life will change.

## Reflection

I really enjoy TBS, Tuesday Bible study, and they are writing these days. What we do is different from other Bible Studies. One week I go and teach and then a week after they gather together with the computer, they sit down, and they actually write about their life from what they studied. For example, Job first chapter about running away. And then next week they come together, and they write about their life of running away. In the beginning, you know, they are like I don't like to do it but now, after four weeks, my goodness, the depth of their writing. They're going to be all writers. It's a really deep and very interesting as they study. Habits are scary. You can build good habits, good spiritual habit, and your life much more enjoyable and joyful.

# We Pray; God Answers

December 31, 2017

1 Samuel 1:4-20

## **Hannah's Famous Prayer**

We're going to talk about Hannah's prayer. It's a very famous prayer, through her prayer, a very famous and great prophet, Samuel was born. You have probably heard the name. Samuel is one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. Hannah's prayer has been known as one of the greatest prayers of mothers, like St. Agustin's mom, Monica. And Hannah's prayer, these are great prayers of mother's in her prayer. She vowed, "Oh Lord of hosts if only you will look on the misery of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant but give her, a male child, then, I will set him before you as a Nazirite until the day of his death." And she was dedicated, even before Samuel was born, she dedicated her child to God and I believe that she must have raised her son as she vowed so that he could be the great Samuel.

## **Hannah's Prayer was Self-Centred**

I'm sure Hannah made a great contribution to make Samuel be Samuel. So, she was a great woman of prayer. That's true. But today, when you look at Hannah's prayer very carefully, it is a very self-centred prayer. It's not really holy in that way. Her prayer was neither a noble prayer for God, God's work in this world, nor for the country, nor for the holy purpose. She prays simply because she was hurt and humiliated and angry, and she was provoked by her rival. She was personally attacked, that's why she prayed. So, it was a very self-centred prayer, when I go over the story once more.

## **Hannah Could not Bear a Child, she felt Rejected by God**

Hannah was a wife of Elkanah. Elkanah had two wives at the time, polygamy was kind of acceptable. Jacob had two wives too. And Moses had a few wives and Elkanah had two wives. One was Peninnah, and the other is Hannah. Unfortunately, Hannah had no children and there was no problem with her husband Elkanah. Elkanah did not give any trouble to his wife because she cannot bear a child, rather, Elkanah showed greater favour to a Hannah. He gave a double portion when they went up to the

temple, they gave sacrifice and each one brought a portion and Elkanah gave Hannah a double portion. So, he was very good to her and he even said that “you know, am I better than 10 sons? Why are you so troubled by the fact that you don’t have a child?” But that didn’t help. Peninnah constantly provoked Hannah for her barrenness. Hannah could not stand the humiliation that she went through because of Peninnah’s personal vendetta, personal hurt. Maybe, she could not stand the fact that she could not bear a child. Not just Peninnah. What Peninnah did was just rubbing salt into her wounds. That’s all. But her problem was the fact that she could not bear a child. I mean it’s not a problem in modern days and some people even choose not to have any children, but at that time it showed the dignity of a person, of a woman. So, she felt like she was not perfect. She felt like she was missing something. She felt like she was kind of rejected even by God. That’s why she prayed nothing else.

### **Hannah Prayed for a Male Child so she Could be set Free of her Stigmatic Misery**

Even though she made a vow, the vow was like a negotiation, listen to the vow, “oh lord of hosts. If, it’s a big if, if it’s a condition, if only you will look on the misery of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant, a male child. Then I will set him before you as a Nazarite until the day of his death is conditional.” Well she won, it was a male child, nothing else. What she wanted was to be set free from her misery. What she wanted was her pride being restored. She wanted to live with pride. Not with the stigma that she cannot have a baby, nobody could solve her problem, even Elkanah could not solve her problem. That is something that she had to deal with. Her prayer was so fervent, so passionate that the priest Eli thought that she was a drunk.

### **Praying for our own Problems Invites Real and Fervent Prayer**

You know when you pray for your problems, all of a sudden, your prayers become real and fervent, not when you pray for others. Not when you pray for world peace, not when you pray for the God’s holy purpose, but when you pray for your problems when you encounter certain problems. Oh, then immediately your prayer becomes fervent and passionate. Hannah told Eli, “No my Lord, I am a woman, deeply troubled. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord do not



regard your servant as a worthless woman. For I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.” She had vexation within her and she was just yelling at him crying out her vexation.

## **Through Hannah’s Powerful Prayer God gave her Samuel, one of the Greatest Prophets**

But the amazing thing has God answered Hannah’s prayer and through Hannah, God gave Samuel, one of the greatest prophets. Samuel was born in a very, very critical and important time of Israel. Israel before Samuel was like a tribal nation. It was like a little tribe, and then they wanted to make a kingdom, so they wanted four kings, so when Samuel was born, Israel changed from a tribal nation to the kingdom, and then Samuel anointed the first King Saul, and then he also anointed David, King David who was born with that fate.

## **God has Hidden Plans for Each and Every one of us**

Through all this, I was thinking about God’s providence. Providence is like God’s, hidden plan, and God’s hidden word. There is an invisible work of God. I call it providence. We don’t know it, but behind the surface, there is tremendous work of God that is done in a hidden way. I’m amazed at how God works in our lives. Whatever happens to you as a person, it’s not just a personal matter. It has a bigger implication in your life. What happens to us is not just about us, it has an implication for the bigger things in life. It is to do with God’s Providence, even the selfish prayer of Hannah, God used. Even the selfish prayer of Hannah was used to move God to make an impact on our history. That was amazing to me, I thought God only listened to real prayer, sincere prayer, faithful prayer and the religious spiritual prayer, but God even used the selfish prayer of a woman to bring out his work.

## **God Works out his Wonderful plan, even Through our Imperfect Prayers**

I believe that that is the power of prayer. Our prayer is very small and limited in its scope and many times and often most of the times it is very self-centred. It is about us. It is about our own personal needs. Who can pray? Knowing God’s great plan or Providence. But God works out his wonderful plan, even though our imperfect prayers, and I learned this about

prayer. Prayer has many layers, I realized. It's not just one layer in prayer, there are many layers. We may see only one layer and praise at the very basic level. That is the level of our personal needs, but your prayers have many layers that we don't see. In that sense, your prayer is a mystery. It opens a new world that you don't know. When you pray it may be your prayer, but once your prayer is done it's not yours anymore. It God's to use. When I pray, while I'm praying, it is my prayer, but once that prayer is done it is not in any more mine. It is in God's hands and God uses that prayer to work out his own plan. So, we don't know the result, no one prays knowing the result.

### **We Pray with one Expectation but Come out with a Totally Different Answer**

Prayer is not like a vending machine that you know exactly what to get. You put a coin and then that thing comes up. Prayer is not like that. When you enter into the prayer, you enter with one expectation, but you come out of it with a totally different answer. That's what prayer is. I pray that your prayers may bring about beautiful results, not only for yourself but also for others. You may have prayed personally only for your personal needs, but your prayers may open up a new world for other people. How much more powerful your prayers can be used if you pray for others and for God's holy purpose

### **Let's Confront Our Problems with Prayer**

Today is the last Sunday and the last day of 2017. May your 2018, be the year of offering many prayers so that you may experience the world you never experienced before. 2017 was great. We have experienced a lot of things in 2017. We prayed without knowing what the result will be, but God answered it in a way that I could never imagine. That was like 2017 and 2018 God has many things in store for you, use your prayers. Offer your prayers, don't think about whether it's a selfish prayer or self-centred prayer. Don't think about it too much. Just offer your prayers and God will use them for a wonderful result. And as I said before, when you have items to worry about, turn those items into prayer topics.

If you have things to worry about, use them as your prayer topics. Don't just run away from your problems, but face it, confront it with prayer. Let us open up 2018 with prayer tonight at night we're going to celebrate a new

year's kind of service. Eleven o'clock it starts and a whole service will be prayer and praise, a very short sermon and all these three things that I like to pray for. One, prayer, repentance, 2017, the things that we didn't do, things that we should have done but didn't do things that we should not have done, but we did. So, prayer, repentance and prayer of Thanksgiving are a lot of things that we should be thankful for. And then prayer, of resolution. So, as we face the first moment of 2018, we may face it with a prayer for attitude.

# Healing Through Worship

January 7, 2018

John 4:19-24

## **Taste of Heaven**

We're going to build up the worship service as much as much as possible this year so that all of us can come and truly experience true worship. But also, so God may be glorified. And during this retreat, I'm going to talk about worship a lot, for two lectures we're going to do that. I hope that many of you can come without understanding what worship is. Giving true meaningful worship is hard if not impossible. So, I hope that, I know you're busy, but take some time out and please come and start the new year with a prayer for heart, and also next week when we have the town hall meeting, please give us your feedback so that we can choreograph this worship service as meaningfully as possible for everyone who worships here at St. Timothy.

Today's the first Sunday of 2018. I pray that God's grace may be with you and with your families this year. God is good, and God is faithful. God works beyond our imagination and God deserves our worship. And this year's theme is healing through worship. And then that is a passage that, that's John 4, 24. I don't know why there's no English one. That's strange. Is there an English one? I know, but there's no word in English. I mean, last year we had it right? Strange. Anyway, that 4, 24 we're going to, we're ready today. So that is our theme passage. We had a KSM prayer retreat last Friday and Saturday we had a wonderful time together.

What happened was like a taste of heaven. We cried together, and we laughed together and most of all we worshiped together in the purest form, purest form. After they learned about worship, the way they gave worse was so beautiful. Friday, we had a lecture and then next morning, Saturday morning, we had a worship together. It was one of the most beautiful worship that I experienced. They were really into worshipping God. We experienced that the worship brings healing, but worship is for God, not for us, not even for our benefits. Absolutely, worship is for God, for no one else only God needs to be glorified and only God should be at the center of our worship. We all hide behind the shadow of the cross.

## **Our Purpose**

Worship is our purpose in life. Worship is the very reason for us to live. We live to worship God. That's Christian belief. We live to worship God. Our ultimate purpose is to glorify God and we glorify God through worship. And last year's theme was serving is living, and this year living is worship. That's what we want to practice this year. God delivered us from the bondage and made us free so that we may be able to worship. That's why the choir anthem was so beautiful. God lifts up our soul so that my spirit may be free when my spirit is free. Then with that freedom. We worship God.

When the Israelites were freed from the bondage of Egyptians, God sent Moses to deliver them from that oppression and bondage and made them free so that they could worship God. That was what Moses said. Let us hear, I'll be with you and this shall be the sign for you. Oh, sorry. Yeah, you read the scripture. Sorry. Yeah. Okay. Oh, my goodness. This a phobia, man. Okay. This part, "I'll be with you and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain." The whole purpose of the exodus was for them to worship God. Today we read the story of the Samaritan woman. We didn't read the whole story because I didn't want to focus on a woman is herself. I want to focus on the meaning of worship that was revealed in the story. We all know the Samaritan woman very well.

## **Worship in Spirit and Truth**

She was a woman who had many problems among them, the greatest problem was that was the fact that she was completely alienated from people you know. It is a terrible experience to be completely alienated from people. That's why bullying is so hard to take. When you are completely alienated from people that is hard to bear, you become lonely, you become angry and sometimes sad and you feel so worthless and you believe that you are unlovable. She felt judged by the people all the time she lived with this deep wound. Hurt was there and Jesus came to her and she just knew exactly what her problem was, and then write at that moment during the conversation, Jesus completely brought her, out of the bondage and oppression of alienation. Jesus restored her. Jesus lifted up her soul, so that her spirit may be free, and Jesus made sure that she knew that you are a precious child. Precious daughter of God and you are lovable and

you're worthy. Jesus wanted to make sure that she knew that when she experienced the salvation, the first thing she did was to go back to the village and met people who alienated her. That's amazing. I mean they're the reason she felt so worthless and unlovable, unloved, but when she was restored by Jesus, she went back to the people who alienated them. She was able to embrace them. In other words, she had enough empowerment to be able to embrace them. She was healed. She was freed.

That's why she was able to go back and meet those people, but before she went back to the village, there is one question. She asked I wonder why she asked that question. During the conversation, she was going back and forth. She didn't say much, but one at one point, something was happening within her and the one question rose from her consciousness. You know what that question was? This was the question, our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem. Her question was where should I worship mountain or in Jerusalem? In other words, what is the best way to worship? That question arose from her conscious, from the depth of her soul. This question came up, what is the best way to worship? Did something happen during her conversation with Jesus? She was experiencing the freedom and when she experienced the freedom, the desire to worship arose from within her heart. That's what it does. That's what happens when you experience the freedom, the desire to worship arises from within. Where should I worship? she asked. Mountain or Jerusalem? That was important to her. Jesus' response was this, Jesus said to her "woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the father, neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, but the hour is coming and is nowhere. When the true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and in truth, for the father seeks the such as those to worship him." God is a spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. That's what it is.

## Healing

God is a spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The important thing about worship is not where you worship. The important thing about worship is where is your heart? Where is your heart in the worship? You worship with your heart. You don't worship in the sanctuary. You worship in your heart because worship is not physical activity. You all the physical activity, but that is self is not worship. Worship. You can only worship from the heart in heart. When you have God in your heart, then

you can worship God in spirit and truth. Worship is not about what you do, worship is about your spirit meeting God's spirit. That's what worship is. Our Spirit meets God spirit. The place of worship is not the sanctuary. The place of worship is your heart. God looks for those who worship God.

The father seeks such as these to worship him. God is calling us to worship God and you all responded to that calling, some of your friends, even some of your family members might not have responded to that calling, leaving them behind at home. We came to worship because God called us to worship him. Let us worship God from the depth of our heart. What we need in worship is an inspiration. Not Emotion. Emotion is at the surface, but inspiration comes from the depth of your soul. What we need is an inspiration, not emotion. This year, I hope that we all learn what it means to worship God and through your worship, I pray that we all so experience healing and restoration. When you give true worship to God, wonderful things will happen in your lives.

# God who Calls

January 14, 2018

1 Samuel 3:1-11

## Those Who Were Called

God called Abraham, Moses and the prophets. When God called Abraham, Abraham did not even question. Immediately, he obeyed God's calling and left his home to go to a place where God called him to go.

When God called Moses, it was a little bit different. Moses was resistant. He said, "I cannot speak. I'm not eloquent. I cannot go." God continuously called him to go and at the end he said, "No, I can't really go, so send my brother Aaron." So it was very different from Abraham. Abraham did not even question, he immediately left his home and went to the place God called. Moses was resistant, but in the end he accepted the call from God and lived out that calling for 40 years, the last 40 years of his life. Very different response, but it has to do with calling.

And also, prophets too. When God called Jeremiah, Jeremiah said, "I'm too young to do anything that you ask me to do," and when God called Isaiah, Isaiah said, "I'm a man of unclean lips. How can I preach your Gospel or good news or message?" All these people responded differently, but their life was to do with the call from God.

When it comes to the New Testament, same thing. God called the ordinary fisher people, fishermen, and God called them. "You follow me," and they left the net and then followed Christ. When God called, when Christ called, Paul, on the road to Damascus, it was a supernatural experience, but he received a call and lived out God's call all throughout his life. For example, Jonah the Prophet who we studied last year, God called him, and he ran away.

So, very different, but it's all to do with God's call. Very interesting. Their lives were intricately connected, with a call. To all these people, life and calling could not be separated. There was no arbitrary division between their personal life and their life of calling. Their life was to fulfill the calling that they received.



## Does God Have My Number?

I wonder, is there a call-in life? Or do I make my own life? What is life that we live? Is there a call that we respond to? Versus “I don’t know about any callings, I’m just busy making my own life.” What is it? Are we so different from the characters in the Bible? Only they got called and God doesn’t call anymore in modern days? Or is calling still a relevant concept to understand my life? I still believe that callings are very much relevant to my life and to our life. That’s what I want to tell you today.

It is wonderful to see that your life is connected with a bigger picture, and I believe that your life is connected with a bigger picture. Your life does not end where you are. It is connected with God’s greater plan. Whatever you do right now has some implication for God’s greater plan. When you have this sense of connected-ness, you will understand that you’re not alone. You don’t have to figure out everything that is going on in your life. You don’t have to solve every problem that you encounter in your lives on your own. You are connected with God and God is with you to help you to work out your life. That was what all these people in the Bible experienced in the background of their lives. They experience that there’s God. In the background of your lives, there is God. You may not necessarily see God, you may do all these things on your own, but in the background of all that you do, there is God. And this God knows you very well. When you read the scripture Samuel, the scripture says, “Samuel did not know Jehovah yet. Samuel did not know God yet, and yet God knew Samuel’s name.” And he knew exactly, “You are the one that I have chosen, and I want you to do this.” God knew Samuel when Samuel did not even know God.

God knows all of us. God knows all of us better than we know ourselves. God knows your struggle, your hurt, your pain, your longing, your weaknesses. God knows all about us, and he will give us what we need. To live a life of calling, we need to be able to hear that calling. We need to be able to hear the voice. We need to be attentive to the voice of God. And I believe that there is a voice of God in our lives, not necessarily audible voice – if you hear them, maybe you may see Joe Park – it may not be audible voice, but I believe that we hear God’s voice. And we try our best to live out that voice that speaks to us. That voice is what inspires us, what prompts us, what gives us conviction. Life is not about a whole bunch of your decisions and your schedule. There are sometimes that you have this urge. This voice nudges you. Sometimes uplifts you. Sometimes speaks to

you very clearly like, “Hey, this what I want you to do.” I believe that there is a voice. We just ignore it a lot of times.

## **We Don't Pick Up**

As we respond to what nudges us, our life is slowly moving towards God's wonderful plan for you and for the world. And it's very important to hear God's voice every day. God said to Samuel, “Then the Lord said to Samuel, see, I'm about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.” Does it tingle right now? It's a very dramatic way or graphic way of listening to the voice of God. It may not be physical tingling, but the tingling of your heart. And it's not always easy to hear God's calling. God had to call Samuel three times. Samuel could not understand. Eli must've been really upset or frustrated. In the middle of the night this boy comes in and says, “Did you call me?” And he woke him up and “No, I didn't call you. Lie down,” and the next night, “Did you call me?” Three times! It was hard to hear God's calling sometimes.

You know, when I read that part of the story, I was reminded of Paul. Paul said he prayed because he had thorn in the flesh and he prayed three times for the thorn to be removed. That three times did not mean that he only prayed three times. He prayed as much as he could, but God did not take out the thorn. So here too, God calls Samuel three times, but it's almost like God called until he really hears it. God called continuously until he hears it, and finally he heard it with the help of Eli.

God calls us sometimes and we don't hear it. Why? Because we are so saturated with our own agenda. With my own plan. Or sometimes we're too strong in our own will, or sometimes we're too distracted, or sometimes we are too painfully hurt, and sometimes we are too proud and arrogant. And so, many times we don't hear God's voice. But God never stops calling us. God never gives up calling us. God continuously calls us.

## **We Are All Called**

The way we started TBS, Tuesday Bible Study, I believe that it was God's calling for me. It's not what I planned. I was busy as I was and then few people came to me – they said they don't go to church, but they wanted to have a Bible study. You don't go to church, why do you want a Bible study? And they said, “Well, we don't go to church, but we are still interested in

what the Bible really, really says.” “Oh, so you want to know what the Bible really says? Sure, I’ll help you.” So that evening at Knox College in that cafeteria, about 20 of us gathered together. And then one person said, “I’m an atheist,” and another person said, “I’m kind of Buddhist.” All kinds of people and they all wanted to have Bible study. That’s how I started. I didn’t know what God’s plan was, but God had a plan when He called me to start a Bible study. Now we have Pastor Simon here, working for our church from that group.

WBS, same thing. Women’s Bible Study. I don’t know, more than 10 years ago I believe now, and a few women wanted to come. They came to me and they wanted to have a Bible study, so I responded to that call. I didn’t know exactly what would entail, what that Bible study might have entailed, and I realized last 10 years I’ve experienced them changing so much, and they had a profound impact on the church itself.

Inner Voice, that was what God nudged me. Called me. At first, I didn’t have confidence, “Everyday? How? How can I do that?” And he said also to do it in English too. I thought I was going to just do Korean and then do the English one too? “What? I can’t!” But God never stops calling. I mean, I have planned this for three, four years. God gave me this idea three or four years ago and I said, “No, I can’t do it. I’m too busy.” And finally, last year I responded to God’s calling. Prayer retreat or New Year’s retreat that we’re going to have... a few years ago, God gave us, gave me that calling. Let people start the new year with prayer, with a fresh spirituality. Let them start with that. “Lord. I’m so busy at the end of the year. You know, I have Christmas worship service and December 31st service and then I have to go to my family gathering and play games all night and all that stuff. I can’t prepare.” And He said, “Do it.” So, I just responded. Happiness seminar is the same thing.

My friends, God calls. God calls each and every one of us to respond to his call. It’s not just Bible people who heard God’s calling. Even now, God is calling all of us. Life is my response to God’s calling. It’s as simplest as that. Life is a response to the calling. Be attentive to God’s voice. Be by yourself, where there’s no distraction to that. Every day be by yourself, where there’s no distraction. Quiet yourself down. Your worries, anxieties and fear, let all those down. Pay attention to God. Try to listen. You can do that. Life is more than your decision. There is something that comes to you from

outside or from the depth of your heart. You need to listen to that voice that comes from the depth of your heart rather than just making schedules every day mindlessly and living it out. Instead of doing that, sit down and what voice comes from the depth of your heart.

As you respond to that calling, your life will be enriched. Sometimes that voice makes you cry. Other times, that voice gives you new strength. And sometimes, that voice leads you to repent. And sometimes, God says, "You will be all right. Don't worry. You'll be fine." When we hear God's calling, we can be true disciples of Jesus Christ. We all go through hardships, uncertainties and difficulties. Don't make yourself numb. Listen, and God will guide you... to a very, very good place. Green pasture. Only if you are able to hear that voice.

# Tomorrow is Better than Today

February 4, 2018

Isaiah 40:27-31

## Through Worship, Healing

Healing through worship. I'm going to talk a little bit about worship right in the beginning, before the sermon, maybe two minutes or so. There's a Korean word, a very interesting word. It is called "MuLib", meaning total immersion. That's what worship is. Total immersion from the beginning to the end. Worship is not what you do, what you do is meaningless. Worship is not the action. Worship is not what you do. Worship is your heart, your spirit meeting God's spirit. So, without that total immersion, without MuLib, we cannot have worship. I mean, you can do all the actions of worship, all the motions of worship, but it is possible that you never worship God in your entire life. When there is no immersion, there is no worship. To this year, hopefully, that from the beginning to the end, we made totally immersed into God's presence and have meaningful and good worship. If we learn how to worship our life will change. Our spirituality will change. Only through the worship, healing is possible. Only through the worship real spirituality is possible.

I believe that tomorrow is better than today. That's what I believe. I live with that belief. Tomorrow will be better than today. Is that not what hope is all about. Hope, meaning that you believe that it will get better. Tomorrow will be better than today. We should live with the belief that life will get better and, we should live a life that gets better as time goes on. Even though our present life may be difficult and very hard, if we have hope, we can see a brighter future. When we see a brighter future, we can have a better attitude towards the present suffering that we are going through. Even though you go through hardship now, if you have hope, you can have a better attitude to deal with the present suffering. That's what that was what Saint Paul said. "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. The glory is not yet here, but the glory that is about to be revealed to us is so great that you can handle the present suffering better."

## Finding Strength

I think hope is very important to live a good and meaningful life. Those who have hope will handle life's difficulties much better than those who have no hope. People who have hope know how to wait. When I see people who live with hope, they know how to wait, they know what it means to wait. This waiting is very important. A hope and waiting can be interchangeable. When you look at NRSV, it says those who wait for the Lord, it's the same Greek, same verse, but in NRSV says those who wait for the Lord, but in NIV, those who hope for the Lord. So, hope and wait are interchangeable. Ability to wait is a very important quality in your life you should learn, not only to survive but also to thrive in your life. When things don't work out as you wish and very well, wait. Learn to wait. It will work out and eventually everything will fall into place. When you have problems and you don't know how to solve your problems, wait. Somehow, you'll find the wisdom to deal with your problem. Waiting is a secret key to your life. When you learn the art of waiting, the wisdom and power will be given to you, and then you will rise up like an eagle. This is hidden to those who cannot wait. This is hidden to those who don't have hope, but to those who know how to wait, they will find this wisdom and strength in their lives.

This is what Isaiah cried out. "Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." They'll have this power and wisdom when they wait for the Lord, they will have this power and wisdom to be able to continue to thrive in their lives. Not those people who are waiting, who know how to wait. It's not because their life is necessarily better than other people. It's not necessarily because their life is easier and more comfortable than other people. Nobody's life is given to them on a silver platter. We all go through difficulties and hardships, and even for those people who wait for the Lord, hope for Lord go through the exact same problem as anybody else. But somehow those people who wait for the Lord and who hope for the Lord, have the strength to persevere through their trials and difficulties and hardships. They don't easily give up. They can persevere. They continue to pursue their life even though it is difficult because they experienced the power that fills them up. That is the power that lifts them up and lets them rise up like eagles.

## Hope for the Lord

Young people learn to hope for the Lord. Learn to wait for the Lord. More than anything else, learn to wait. You'll become very strong people. You will receive all kinds of challenges in your life, but you will be able to handle them if you know how to wait and how to hope for the Lord. Tomorrow will be better than today, is not a guess. That is not our wishful thinking. Oh, I wish that tomorrow is better than today. It's not wishful thinking. It is your faith confession and it is also your commitment. Yes, tomorrows got to be better than today. The reason the early Christians could survive through persecutions, martyrdom and hardships and all kinds of severe situations was that they believed that tomorrow will be better than today. They had this confession that tomorrow will be better than today. That's how they survived and persevered.

Christian life I believe that it is not just maintaining the status quo. It is our struggle to make tomorrow better, to make our future better. When I say tomorrow will be better than today. I'm not talking about your life situations. I'm not saying that your life situation will be better tomorrow than today. St Paul life situation became worse after he met Christ. I'm not talking about the life situations, but you will change. Tomorrow you will be better. So, you'll be able to handle your life situations better. Saint Paul got better and better every day, even though his life situations changed. That's a winner. Be a winner in that way. Be strong in that way. Don't let your circumstances crushed you down. Believe that tomorrow will be better and then God will make you better.

## Look to the Lord

Jesus said this parable, "the Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown, it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." What does it tell you? Tomorrow will be better than today. It starts with a small seed. Have you seen mustard seed? It's so small that you cannot even see it very well. And tomorrow it will be like a tree where the birds of the air will come and find rest. Maybe you start with a very smart person who is very selfish and self-centred. You only think about yourself in the beginning, so small, but later you become a big person. A bigger person so that other people find rest in you. That should be what our life should be like. We cannot

continuously be selfish and self-centred and just ask for something to be given to me, but you will become a bigger person so that you are not just receiving person. You become a giving person at the end. Our life must change like that. When you're more immature, when you're young, yes, of course, you will only think about yourself, but as you grow mature, more mature, you think about other people, so you become a bigger person in this way. This is what the Christian journey is all about.

Sometimes we feel like we are stuck. Sometimes you feel so tired and drained and sometimes we see no future and there'll be no way out, that when you wait for the Lord. Instead of letting yourself be discouraged, that is when you wait for the Lord, hope for the Lord. And you will have to meet God who gives power to the feet and strengthens the powerless. When you look to God, you will have hope. Hope is not something that you can create on your own, only when you look to God, that God can give you the hope and with that hope you wait, and you'll become a bigger person. And the hope will give you a new strength.

God wanted to teach this to the Israelite. He showed all kinds of things to the Israelite. He made a way when there was no way it was possible. For example, in the middle of the ocean, God made a way and then when there was no food, God gave them food and God gave you the water in the desert. He gave everything for them so that they know how to wait for the Lord, but when Moses disappeared into Mount Sinai to get the 10 commandments, he wasn't around for a while and these people cannot wait for the Lord. What did they do? They made a golden calf and dance around the golden calf. You know in other words, "I have to make my own destiny now This Moses guy? I don't know where Moses says, let us create our own idols, our own help, and this golden calf will lead us from now on." They didn't know how to wait for the Lord. they created their own destiny. Don't do that. When you're desperate, when you feel powerless, wait for the Lord rather than creating your own resources, your own idols. Don't take care of yourself by yourself. You'll fall into a deeper problem. Look to God and God will give you hope. And with that hope, wait and you will become strong. God will strengthen you.

## **Wait for the Lord**

Isaiah wrote today's passage when they were captivated, Israel because of their sins and problems. They were invaded so they were all captives by



Babylon. So, Isaiah wrote this when they were in Babylon and they lost their country. They lost their temple. They lost their identity. They lost everything. So, in that battle, in the foreign country, Isaiah cried out, wait for the Lord, wait for the Lord, and that Lord will strengthen you guys. Wait for the Lord.

To all of us, God tells us to wait. And when you have this waiting heart, your tomorrow will be better than today. That waiting heart, that yearning is crucial in living a good life. Life without yearning is dead life. When you have that yearning to make your tomorrow better than today. Yes, your tomorrow will be better than today. As the deer pants for the water wait for God. When you come to worship, wait for the Lord to touch you, to speak to you, to empower you, to open your eyes, to give you the wisdom. And God will give you that secret wisdom to you as you seek the Lord. There was another prophet after Isaiah. His name is Jeremiah. Jeremiah cried out like this. Call me and I'll answer you and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. Call me I will show you the secret, secret of life.

## **Reflection**

All the YA, as you enter university and you're dealing with all kinds of new challenges, learn to wait for the Lord. Learn to hope for the Lord and Hi-C now your beautiful life is ahead of you but also at the same time, all the challenges will be in front of you. When life's difficulties come, learn to wait for the Lord and he will help you. He will guide you. And you will go, "Oh God is alive." God gave me this wisdom and this strength that I never knew before. God will do that. And all of us, those who wait for the Lord God will strengthen you. Let us trust in the Lord who gives the strength to the faint and power to the weak.

# Three Things We Believe

February 25, 2018

Romans 4:17-18

## **Worship and Living with Faith**

Just before the sermon, I gave a little blurb about worship. Worship is something that you give with faith. Without faith, it is not possible to give worship because worship is not an action. Worship is not what you do. Worship is something that happens internally between you and God. So only way to really worship God is through faith. Only through faith. You cannot figure out God with your brain. You can only approach God through faith. And when you approach God through faith, something wonderful happens. As we heard the song today, God made everything beautiful and that beauty of life will be experienced in our lives through the worship. So wonderful things can happen. So, I hope that your life opens, and you experienced that a beauty of life.

I believe that living with faith is very important. Living with faith is more beneficial than living without faith. You can live more meaningfully, and you can achieve even more in life. Abraham is known as the father of faith and I believe that he lived with faith and he lived a truly blessed life. Even hope against hope. He believed he encounter all kinds of impossible situations, but somehow Abraham learns to deal with all his situations, with faith. Not with his brain. For a while he tried to deal with his situation with his brain, he ended up making more mistakes, but somehow, he learned to deal with these situations through faith and in the end, he became a father of faith. If there's one thing that you need to learn in life, I will say, it is faith. But this learning is different from what you can learn in school. It isn't life learning, so it's a little bit more complex than studying the textbook and all that. It involves your life, situations, circumstances, and your attitude, who you are, and everything is involved, but somehow if there's one thing that you need to learn in life, I believe that that is faith. That if you learn to live your life with faith, you can deal with a lot of situations in a healthy and productive way. Your life will be very different.

Of course, when I talk about faith, I'm talking about faith in Christ and faith in God. But today what I'm going to talk about is when that faith is

manifested in our life, what does it look like? How does it manifest itself in life? And I would like to share three things with you.

## **Circumstances**

The first, I believe in circumstances. I believe in circumstances. That's how faith is manifested. Our circumstances are not always good. There are times that our circumstances are very bad, unbearable even. Sometimes there are times when things work out very well, but there are also moments when life gets so entangled that you don't know where to start to untangle your life. But no matter how difficult our situations maybe I believe that there is always a way out. That's what I believe. There always a way out. I believe that all our circumstances will work out alright. If we learn to be patient. A lot of times we make it worse by trying to untangle on our own, but when we wait with faith, somehow our circumstances, life circumstances have their own ways of resolving themselves. We need to be patient. We need to wait, and we must trust in the fact that the circumstances will find their own way out. Even in a hopeless situation, there is a way out.

This is what Saint Paul said. "We know that all things, all things meaning, all circumstances will work together for good, for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. All circumstances ultimately will work together for good." That's what St Paul believed. He believed in circumstances, but all these circumstances will work out for good. That was how Abraham lived his life. Even when he had no child, not a single child, God told him that you will be a father of great nations, many nations. And somehow, he believed when he had no child, he believed. Kind of dumb. When you really look at it. Being too smart, it's not really being smart. I realized sometimes being dumb is good and Abraham somehow believed that he will be a father of many great nations. And then he got a son, Isaac, and he was so happy. Finally, God is doing his work and then suddenly God told him to sacrifice your son. But strangely he again believed. Somehow something will work out. So, he brought his son Isaac to be sacrificed, believing that somehow there'll be a way out. And there was a ram right there. Jehovah Jireh, meaning God prepares in all circumstances, Abraham somehow believed, believed that things will work out. If you can believe that you can live a powerful life.

Don't be victims of your circumstances. Overcome your circumstances and do not fear difficult circumstances. Do not give up just because you face many difficult circumstances. When you learn to live with faith, you will be able to see how things work out for good. I've encountered many impossible situations personally, but also other people's lives and in the end, things worked out. And I'm thankful to God for that. I believe in myself. That's how faith manifests itself. I believe in myself because God chose me. I believe in myself because God believes in me. This is what Isaiah said, "do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine." This is what Isaiah believed. You are mine God said. I have chosen you. I have called you.

There's another prophet, Jeremiah, before he was in his mother's womb, somehow God used Jeremiah. Even before he was born, when he was in mother's womb, God set him aside as a prophet. But unfortunately, Jeremiah did not believe in himself. This is what Jeremiah said, "our Lord God truly, I don't know how to speak. For I am only a boy. I'm not a prophet. I'm only a boy." Jeremiah did not believe in himself. When he did not believe himself, God said to Jeremiah "do not say, I'm only a boy, for you shall go to all. To whom I send you and you shall speak, whatever I command you, do not be afraid of them, for I'm with you to deliver you." God told Jeremiah, "trust in yourself. Don't say you're just a boy." Trust yourself. Don't just say that you are a failure, or I cannot do this. I cannot do that. Don't just say that. Believe in yourself. You can do many things. I believe in myself, not because I'm great, not because I can handle everything well. I make so many mistakes, I fail so many times, but still, I believe in myself because God chose me. God called me. God strengthens me, and God protects me.

## **Believe in the Future**

Peter articulated our human identity or believer's identity in this way, "but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." I don't know how Peter got all this message to some miracle. I mean that's how he saw himself and others. In order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. That was how he saw himself. If you don't believe in yourself, you cannot achieve anything. God works through you, but if you don't believe in yourself, how

can God work through you? Only when you believe in yourself, then God can work through you. If you are weak, God will give you strength. If you have no wisdom, God will give you wisdom.

Even before Jesus started his ministry, he was preparing himself by being baptized for his ministry. The first thing that God taught Jesus was, believe in yourself. That was the first thing God taught Jesus. This is what God said. "You are my beloved son. With you, I am well pleased." In other words, make sure that you remember that you are my son, the beloved, and I am very well pleased with you. Make sure you know that. No matter what circumstances you may go through, make sure that you know that you're my son. Right after that, Satan comes to Jesus and said to Jesus, if you are the son of God, are you the son of God? He was questioning Jesus, but the first thing God said to Jesus was, you are my son, beloved. I am well pleased with you. Jesus had to believe in himself in all kinds of situations. When you believe in yourself, there'll be nothing in the world that can destroy you. In any situation. You will come out strong. Come on strong. Believe in yourself.

Third, I believe in my future. I preached a few weeks ago. Tomorrow will be better than today. That's what I believe. I lived without faith. Tomorrow will be better than today. We learned from the past live in the present and believe in the future. Somebody said, "the future belongs to those who believe in it. For those who don't believe in the future, there is no future. But the future belongs to those who believe in it." God told Jeremiah "for surely I know the plans I have for you, plans for your welfare and not for harm. To give you a future with hope." I believe that. This morning preparing to come to church we turned on the TV and then there was an Olympic closing ceremony. And the chairperson of our IOC came out and said a similar thing. "I have faith in the future. Yes, I have faith in the future. I have faith that someday in the future there will be no situation where the powerful exploit the weak, but everybody lives with equality and love, harmony and understanding. And I believe in the future that North and South Korea will be reunified and become one country. I believe in the future. All nations will come together in harmony and love." I do believe in the future. Future is not something we can see. You cannot see the future with your physical eyes, but we can see the future with the eyes of hope. If you have eyes of hope and believe in the future, you can persevere through your adversity in the present. If you don't have it, you cannot

persevere. But when you have that, when you have faith in the future, you can persevere through your adversity.

I believe in what St Paul said. This is what Saint Paul said. “I am confident of this. That the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.” This is a word that I gave to MiSun when she suffered quite a bit/ Ultimately God will bring things to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. Luke recorded what the people who received the Holy Spirit look like. When you receive the Holy Spirit, what do they become? This is what he said” ‘in the last days it will be,’ God declares, ‘that I’ll pour out my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.’ ” Prophecy, visions, dreaming dreams. They became the people who believe in the future. When the Holy Spirit comes, that’s what happens.

The early Christian survive through extreme persecution and difficulties. They worship like this, and the next day so and so got killed and so and so disappeared. All kinds of stories they heard every day. But they went through and persevere through extreme situations because they believed in the future. And they saw the future and the future they saw was this. Let me read it for you. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, see, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. Mourning and crying and pain will be no more for the first things have passed away.” When you look at the second part is all future tense. They will. They will, they will, he will, but in the beginning, then I saw a new Heaven. They saw the future and they believed the future and they fought for the future. You are God’s people, you’re God’s chosen race. God called you to bring about a better, brighter future in this world. Let us believe in God who is working through us.

# Life's Confidence

March 25, 2018

Isaiah 50:4-9

## Retaliate

Before the worship, we briefly meditate on what we're, what attitude, what worship is, and what attitude we should have, and then what kind of heart does God really desire from us? I think the heart that God receives from us is a broken heart, brokenness. Humble brokenness God will never despise. God will see that broken heart with mercy and grace and that is the part that gives true worship to God. Today, I'd like you to picture this particular verse, verse six. I gave my back to those who struck me and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard. I did not hide my face from the insult and spitting. I want you to look at that scripture passage and then think about it. If you put yourself into it, how would you feel? It is a troubling picture in a way. I see a totally helpless victim and we don't like this kind of picture. If people strike us, we strike back so that they will never strike us again. If people insult us and spit at us, we will not just take; we will retaliate. We believe that that is the right thing to do, but is there anything that we can learn from what we just read?

When you look at the picture very carefully, you will be able to see what Jesus went through. That was exactly what Jesus went through. That is what the cross it looks like. Is there anything that we can learn from the cross or there's nothing to learn from the cross? The Cross can be very dangerous in a certain sense. When people hit us, abuse us, and insult us, they destroy our self-esteem, dignity and self-worth. Our core self is attacked. That's why it is painful. That's why we people react and retaliate because they want to protect that inner self, the core self that holds us together. Otherwise, we'll collapse. I find people very difficult. That is the most difficult thing to deal with. The people or the most difficult thing to deal with. I mean all the hard work and that's fine, but people are very difficult to deal with. People can be selfish and self-centered, and people are very unpredictable. One day they are very good, but the next day they are totally different. Are they the same person? We wonder. People give us the greatest joy, but at the same time, they give us the deepest pain.

Because of people we laugh, but also because of the people we cry. People are difficult to deal with and also people can be quite cruel at times. When their hearts are closed, they can be quite cruel. When we look at the way they killed Jesus. We can see how cruel human beings can be. From human cruelty, even God's son was not spared. To this image shows us the cruel image of human beings. They struck, pulled out the beard, spat and insulted. I once witnessed on the street to a person actually beating another person. You ask the cruellest scene where the face he punched, and the other guy fell down on the street and he went and then kept punching at him. When I saw that, I was so disturbed by that scene. That's a cruelty. Not only are our people cruel, but also they're very ignorant. They don't know what they're doing often. They don't even know how much they hurt other people. That's why Jesus on the cross said, Lord, they do not know what they're doing, but Jesus asked for God's forgiveness for them.

That's a miracle. That's amazing! and he's on the cross. They were nailing him on the cross and then Jesus was thinking, they don't know what they're doing. Forgive them. That's the very hard thing to do. How nice it will be if he can be a warm and loving presence to people around us, how nice it will be if you can give them joy and hope.

## **Crushed**

How nice that will be. If my presence can give some joy and hope to other people, that's a wonderful thing to do, to be, but we're not always, we know that. Many times we hurt others; cause pain in them and make them angry, especially to those near us around us and that pain is so deep that is hard to overcome. That's why we need to always humbly discipline ourselves so that we know what to say and what not to say and be always considerate and show kindness to whoever we meet and that is a right thing to do as a human being to those people who are strangers, we need to be considerate and kind. We should not say hurtful things about people. Even though we try so hard still, we make mistakes and hurt others unconsciously, and how much more will hurt other people if we live mindlessly? We just act out our emotion. How much we will hurt other people. Even if we discipline ourselves is so hard not to hurt other people, but if you just behave like you feel like it, how much more you will hurt other people.



Not only do we hurt other people, but we also get hurt by others. We don't remember well the pain that we caused in others, but we remember vividly the pain we received from others. There is no hurt that is not painful. It doesn't matter how small, maybe all the hurts are painful, maybe or hurt often our self that is deep within gets wounded. When we are hurt. we feel like I'm nobody. They make me feel that way. When you heard they feel like I'm a pitiful an existence. Our dignity gets crushed and our self-worth is taken away from us and we get thrown into the deep darkness and we even doubt about ourselves. Our damaged itself, distorted image and the dark shadow will torment us, and we get angry and we lose ourselves. That's why the cross is dangerous because you lose yourself if you're not careful. They tried to get rid of anything beautiful from Jesus. He could not just kill Jesus. They had to kill you just as a condemned person. They did not just want to kill Jesus. They wanted to condemn Jesus and let people know that he died because of his own curse. That's what they wanted to do. They trampled on Jesus integrity and took away any importance left in him. That was the cross.

Most of us maybe we actually experienced the cross will get devastated, will be devastated. Will not be able to survive. A lot of us will lose ourselves. We may not be able to stand up again once we experienced that kind of cross in our lives. Somehow, Jesus was different even though people try to take away dignity from him. He had that dignity intact. He was confident. He didn't lose himself. He did not bow down before their insults and humiliation. They took everything from Jesus, but they cannot destroy the soul. They took away everything from Jesus and they crushed everything Jesus said, but they cannot destroy the soul, the core existence of Jesus.

## Confidence

I think the key is verse 8 and 9. When we read again verse 8 and 9, it shows us why he was able to have that confidence. He who vindicates me is near. He is God. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord who helps me, who declare me, who will declare me guilty. He had confidence in God. When you have confidence in God, you can have confidence in yourself and no one can crush you. Once we have confidence in God, no one can take away your dignity. We don't get. We won't get affected so much by what people say to us, about us. How people treat me is not the most important thing that we worry about anymore. We don't get affected by

what others do to us anymore. We can be confident and strong. As we live our lives. Yes, we meet all kinds of people. The thing is we cannot change them. Can you not expect them to be changed? Well, we can continuously get hurt and when your soul is damaged by them, that's not right. We need to build the core in our identity and I think that's what God can give us, when we have confidence in God, even though they may hurt us, they should not destroy. They will not be able to destroy our soul.

The world condemned Jesus as being wrong, but Jesus' resurrection proves the world wrong. God knows us and when we have confidence in God, we can embrace people's criticisms. That's hard. That's hard, but when we have confidence in God, then we can embrace people's criticisms. If there is something wrong with us that we repent and change, but if they misunderstand me, even that we can embrace their misunderstanding and we can move on with life. We can on with life. We don't live anymore by what other people say about me or how other people treat me. I have my way because God gives me that confidence. Don't ever forget that you are beloved, beautiful children, children of God. Instead of reacting to our situations and to what people do to us, we live with confidence in God and in ourselves. Don't pay evil for evil. When we have confidence about God, we don't need to pay evil for evil. We will pay evil for good. That is the power of the cross and will serve without a feeling of pity. We will serve others and love others with confidence. That's what Jesus did. That is the power of the cross. They cannot humiliate me anymore.

# Against God

April 15, 2018

Acts 5:34-42

## The Christian Movement

There were two big pillars of Jewish thought. These two schools actually govern the thought of Jewish people during Jesus' time and before Jesus' time and one was the school of Hillel and the other was the school of Shammai. The school of Hillel was a more open and progressive, but the school of Shammai was conservative and devoted. Both are good schools, but they're thinking or a different. Gamaliel in today's scripture was from the school of Hillel. Actually, as a matter of fact, his grandfather was a Hillel, so he was very much influenced by Hillel's thought and, you know, very famous disciple of Gamaliel. And that is St. Paul that we know very well. So, St. Paul was also from the school of Hillel.

Gamaliel was so respected by the people during that time. And when Gamaliel passed away, the people said the spirit of the law is deceased, like deceased, like disappeared now. That was the light of the interpretation of the law is gone. That much Gamaliel was very much respected. So, they gave him the name Rabban and it's kind of glorious teacher kind of idea. As you read today's passage, you see Gamaliel speaking on behalf of the disciples. He was very humble and open to the new ideas because they are just new ideas, let us not reject them, let us be open and see what they have to say. That was Gamaliel's attitude and that is very much spirit of Hillel school. The Hillel School had that kind of attitude, progressive and open attitude, and what Gamaliel did was very much the spirit of Hillel.

And so, he said, let them be alone. A high priest and the temple police tried to kill Jesus' disciples. But as we reflected last week, when they killed Jesus, they would not have left the disciples alone. They would have wanted to kill them movement altogether. So we see the continuation of that atmosphere, but somehow the disciples changed, but the Jewish authorities tried to kill the disciples. This is what they said when they heard this, they heard that these people were preaching Jesus, they were in enraged and wanted to kill him. I mean they thought that by killing Jesus, everything was over, but still, they were talking about Jesus continuously.

So, they were kind of annoyed by the disciples. So, they wanted to kill them off. That's the kind of atmosphere.

But Gamaliel, who was very much respected. He stood up and he told the disciples to go outside, and there for a short time. And then he addressed the Jewish authorities. At that time, it was a St. Hadrian. St. Hadrian was the most powerful kind of group, a political group or religious group. At that time politics and religion were not separate. So, they made all the decision in Sanhedrin, he was very much respected. And he told he addressed the kind of parliament. He addressed the St. Hadrian. This is what he said, "fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men. So, in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone." Just before that, he talked about Theudas and the Judas and then he said, "so in that, in this present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone. Because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. In that case, you may be even being found fighting against God." I think St. Gamaliel, believed that this is a movement of human origin. That's why he gave the example of Theudas and Judas, you know, they all had their leaders and they are 400 people followed it, but the leaders were killed and the whole movement that was killed. He gave two examples of that. And in this one too, you know, leaders died. So this movement is going to go die too. So, don't worry too much about it. Just leave them alone. Let them alone. There was Gamaliel's attitude I believe, but without realizing it, he prophesied about the movement of the Christian movement, about Christian movement. He prophesied. He confirmed that this is God's movement. No one could stop. He said that no one can stop this movement if it is of God's origin. I mean, that's not what he meant to say, but somehow without realizing it, he prophesied, and he confirmed that Jesus movement and Christian movement was of God's origin.

## **Stopping the Movement**

So be careful with what you say. Sometimes it comes true without realizing. You may say it's just anything, but you may come true. I mean, he said he said this thing without really realizing it, but somehow that, that `came true and he said, if that is from God, you try to stop it, then you are against God.

But the history. So, there's an irony in history, our human history is so ironical because his own disciple St. Paul tried to stop this movement.

That's why he was going to Damascus. On the road to Damascus, he met the risen Christ, but the reason he went to Damascus was to kill off this movement. To stop this movement, but on the road to Damascus, he met the risen Lord and he realized that all the things he did all along, he thought that he was working for God, but he was working against God. His own disciple, Gamaliel's own disciple, did the thing, and then St Paul, he established a foundation of Christian thought. Jesus preached a lot, but a lot of people say that without St. Paul, there would not have been Christianity because he gave all the contents and substance of Christian beliefs about the law, about faith, about salvation, about forgiveness, everything. He just made all that and that was Gamaliel's disciple.

God used the example of Gamaliel to be the person to establish the foundation of the Christian belief system. Isn't it amazing how God works? We don't know how God works. I mean the disciples sitting there hearing Gamaliel, they would not have even imagined that his own disciple would be the person who established the foundation of Christian belief. They would not have even imagined it. God's work is so awesome. Filled with awe and mysterious. It is not in our control. We don't know exactly what the outcome will be. Once Jesus told Nicodemus that you have to be born again, and then he said that this very strange thing, this is what he said, the wind blows where he chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes to. I mean you hear the sound of the wind, you know that there is some kind of God's movement, but you don't know exactly where it comes from and where it's going to. What the result may be. You don't know. What God does in our lives. We don't know exactly where this takes us to. I believe that God works in your life every single person's life, but we don't leave exactly what that will end up with. We don't know.

## Structure

It is very different from the life that we live. We live in this day and age. We live in a very well-structured system and live by that tight schedule that is set for us. We feel comfortable when everything is in our control and we know exactly what the outcome will be of what we are doing. Then we feel comfortable with everything turns out exactly as I planned. Then we say that: it's a good life. We don't really know whether it's a good life or not, but it just turned out to be exactly as I scheduled as I planned. Is that good life necessarily? When things go out of control is not a good life. Who are you

to say that? Well, we are living. We are so comfortable with a life that is under our control. In our own grip and then that's what we pursue continuously. That's what I St. Paul tried to kill off this movement because they are distributing the order and also same as the Jewish authorities. Do they are? They are disturbing the order of the society they have. They have to go to keep this good structure society, but today, disciples were so different.

This is what his disciples said. "As they left the council, they rejoiced that there were considered worthy to suffer this honour for the sake of the Name." I mean disciples, I don't think they planned to be arrested. Their plan was the experience of God's power that he proclaimed the news and the people will receive the good news and that they will convert and all that, and then they will do God's work, but they were arrested. That was not their plan, but that's okay. And they were beaten up and they even said, "I'm honoured to be beaten up. I'm honoured to suffer." I mean the way they take their life situation is so different. Nothing. Life doesn't have to happen in the way they want it. Whatever it happens to us, they were happy. They rejoiced. They went out, they were whipped, and they went out rejoicing and they kept doing what they were doing. Oh, I see very strong, confident people here.

## Confident

What did they have? They're very different from people that we saw last week. They were behind the closed door. They were trembling with fear. Last week we saw that and, but today I see two people standing tall. I mean not to people, but the disciples standing tall and very confident. Why? Because they believe that God's movement, no one can stop. What we are doing is God's movement and no one can stop this movement, that confidence they had. Just before this passage, they were arrested. As soon as they were arrested, Peter and the disciples stood tall and they were very confident that, that this is what they said, but Peter and the apostles answered, "we must obey God rather than any human authority." I mean they could be killed it right there, but they didn't care. I'd rather listen to God, than the human authority, because you cannot stop God's movement. I like that confidence. The confidence of life comes from that belief that God's movement no one can stop. Your confidence in life doesn't come from your ability, your intelligence, or how powerful you are, how capable

you are. No, real confidence in life comes from the belief that your life is in Garson and no one can stop you from doing God's work.

There were bold. They were confident they were strong. No, there are times when things don't work out as well. Sometimes we face problems that overwhelm us, and our situations are sometimes hopeless and sometimes we feel that I cannot do any, anything further because all my strength is drained and gone. I have no power.

## **God's Will**

Even a yesterday, just a whole day I was kind of looking at the weather at CP 24 and. Oh, freezing rain. Wait, when does it start? Right at 8:00. Oh Gosh, 8 o'clock? That's when our KSM members started coming to church. I hope that you know, there are a lot of elderly people I hope that they don't get into an accident and all that. And after it's going to be a small service. And then I checked the email and then I found out that Josh can't make it and okay, this is Jonathan is going to Korea. So, who's going to lead the praise? And we asked the KSM members too. So, I called Chung moksanin to discuss it, to arrange and all. Sometimes life is out of control. It doesn't happen as we wish, but a lot of people, when that happens, that's when they become weak and they lose confidence in life. I hope that you don't do that. That's when you should realize that God's will is bigger than ours. God's power is stronger than ours and God's wisdom is deeper than ours.

I want you to repeat after me: "God's will is bigger than ours. God's power is stronger than ours. God's wisdom is deeper than ours." When everything goes wrong, that's what you need to believe. God's movement you can never stop. That was what Isaiah realized. This is what he said. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways says the Lord, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." That's what Isaiah realized.

What we need to do is to try our best to follow God's will and do our best. This all we can do, and we have to do. Beyond that, you cannot do anything, you try to find God's will as much as possible and do your best. Don't worry and don't focus too much on the result. When you focus too much on the result, then sometimes you get influenced by human ways.

You use your brain to change the course, to force the situations. Sometimes when you force the situations, it may look good for a while, but in the long run, it may lead you astray. Nothing to do with God's will then you'll be against God. So instead of focusing too much on the result, trying to find your gospel as much as possible and do your best.

What we need is a confidence and belief that God's will shall be done. Right after Isaiah says, God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts and all that. This is what he says, "for as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there until they have water, the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth. It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and succeed in the thing for which I sent it." I mean God's word will be done. God's will be done. This is what God is saying. Jesus followed God's will and that's why he forgave people. He loved people and he taught them God's truth, but unfortunately, people did not receive Jesus' teaching, people did not receive Jesus' forgiveness and love the constantly challenged Jesus and ultimately, they kill Jesus on the Cross. They crucified him. In the meanwhile, Jesus could have changed his method. Okay, this doesn't work. Let's do this. Let's do that as something else, maybe we do. It doesn't matter, but Jesus didn't do that. Jesus just carried the cross the ultimate end was carrying the cross.

## God's Way

God brought resurrection through the cross. The most ineffective way, maybe. Maybe the stupidest thing or most foolish thing to do. That was a cross, and yet that through that cross resurrection was possible. I was thinking the disciples must've been really frustrated following Jesus and you always talk about love, love, love. when everybody's hating you, everybody's going against you. Do something different. I think the disciples could have been very frustrated. That's why Judas betrayed him. Hey, this guy, no hope, no use. Let's do something else. That's why he betrayed Jesus, but Jesus kept on going.

But now, the disciples realized that God's movement cannot stop. They finally realized only through that cross, the resurrection was possible, and the cross was not necessarily the foolishness. They realize. Finally, they learned, there is God's way. We don't know the way. You want to serve



God. Serve with faith, don't serve God with your brain. God's work is too deep, too profound. Do you want to serve God? Serve with faith, that God's movement cannot stop. The disciples would not have imagined while Gamaliel that his disciple who make the foundation of the Christian belief system. God is still working with within us. Live your life with confidence, live with joy. Don't give up. Be always humble. Be always humble and live your life with faith. In the end, it will see the amazing result of your life. The process may look foolish, but the end will be in God's hand.

# The Power to Keep on Going

June 3, 2018

2 Corinthians 4:5-12

## The Struggle

We feel like we cannot take another step. Sometimes we feel like throwing the towel. No matter what we do we see no result and we are going nowhere and we give our best shot, and yet even with the best shot was not good enough. We feel like giving up solving our problems. We have tried all different things different ways and yet nothing works. That's when we feel helpless and hopeless. We all experience that in our lives. Some people struggle with their marriage. Doesn't matter what they do. Somehow, nothing seems to work. Some people struggle with their teenager children. They love them, but they don't know what to do with them. Sometimes teenage children, students a, feel that with their parents, no matter what they do, you cannot, they get never pleased them. I remember my daughter, my own daughter used to say, we can never please you guys. Teenage students, they go through their own struggles. Some people struggle with their health, they try their best, but it does not work, and they don't know what to do.

When you feel that, what do you do? When you feel this helplessness and hopelessness, what do you do? I suggest that you go back to the basics, go back to the basics. What are the basics? Look to God. That's what basic is, you have to look to God. That's exactly the moment that you need to look to God. When we look into today's passage, even Saint Paul the greatest disciple and apostle who founded Christianity. Even that great Saint experienced, the same thing as we experienced: total exhaustion, total helplessness, and total hopelessness. He also felt that there was nothing for him to do anything. He said he was afflicted in every way, but that's not all, he said, he confessed that he had looked to God. He went back to the basics. He looked to God.

This was what he said. "For it is the God who said, let my shyness that God has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He looked at God and then somehow as he, look to Jesus Christ the light of the glory, shone upon him and he saw

that light and he was filled with that light and that light gave him hope and new strength. He had this spiritual moment of experience in the power that did not belong to him. He experienced the power that comes from outside himself. He didn't know what to do but somehow as the light of glory shone upon him he experienced empowerment in life.

## **A Helping Hand**

Spiritual people look to God. I hope that we all become spiritual people. When you have problems, don't look anywhere else. Just look to God. They don't go to self-help books. They don't go depending on common sense or street wisdom. They don't trust their own power alone. They looked to God when their problems been looked to God. If you are able to do that, you are lucky. We have to live a spiritual life. As we live, a spiritual life, we will experience the extraordinary power that doesn't belong to us. People who look to God, need God, the people who need God they experience the power that comes from God. Saint Paul looked to God and he met God and as he met God he experienced the power that did not belong to him but that belongs to God.

There was a famous concert pianist, the early part of 20th century. His name was Ignacy Paderewski, 1860 to 1941. He was also prime minister of Poland. There's a very famous story about him. He once had a great concert hall. He was so famous at that time. There were lots of people came. There were all waiting for his performance with excitement and enthusiasm, but the time came, and he didn't appear. So people were wondering, "why isn't on the stage yet?" While they were wondering, a little boy came down the aisle and started walking towards the stage. Everyone looked, what is he doing. And he went up to the stage and he went over to the piano and the sat down and he started playing Chopsticks. It was the only song he knew how to play. Chopsticks. And then people were kind of mumbling to each other "what is he doing," "where are his parents," "they should take him down," and all kinds of commotion going on. And then Paderewski, in the back of the stage. He heard this commotion, and instead of telling the usher to remove him, he came out in the tuxedo and he came behind the little boy who was playing chopsticks, with his big hands on the right side and left side. He was doing improvising the accompaniment of Chopstick. The ordinary playing of a little boy became an extraordinary masterpiece. Do you know what he said to the boy? "Keep

playing. Keep doing it. You are doing very well. Do not stop. Do not stop. Keep playing.” While he was doing the improvise accompaniment.

Listening to this story, I was thinking about [unknown]. With our small hands. We are trying to make our life. We struggle and struggle and struggle and then the big hands come behind us and start playing our life. And then our life becomes all of a sudden extraordinary. Our ordinary life becomes extraordinary. And God speaks to us; “Keep playing. Keep moving on. Do not give up. You are doing well.” Sometimes we all feel like giving up. I’m done. I can’t go anymore. And yet God comes to us, do not give up, keep moving, I’ll be with you. And he plays the music with us. I wish that you all experience God coming to you. I wonder what would have happened to that boy. There was no record of what happens to the boy. I can imagine that he will never forget the experience that he had in his entire life.

Once you experience that extraordinary power, you will never forget that. You will always look to God. When life is difficult, we need to experience God’s hand then our difficulties become our blessings. When life is good, we don’t experience blessings. When life is difficult, those difficulties can become blessings in disguise. When life is hard, look God. The fear will disappear in the background and new confidence will appear in the foreground. Anger will die down and you will be able to embrace your life. Dark clouds will move over and you will see a bright sunshine. That our life will be much more enjoyable. Are you going through a hard time? Difficult time? Learn to look to God, you will be stronger.

# God Sees Us

June 10, 2018

2 Corinthians 4:13 – 5:1

## **Doubt**

There was a famous American author who was deaf, blind, her name was Helen Keller. She said this, “the best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.” It is true, the really beautiful things in life. You don’t see them with your eyes. You have to feel it with your heart. That’s why people close their eyes when they enjoy the beautiful things, they want to taste it rather than seeing it. I think our faith is like that too. Faith is not to accept what you see. Faith is to accept what you don’t see. You believe and see. Not that we see and believe the order is the other way. The first belief, and then we’ll be able to see it.

Once Thomas doubted about Jesus’ resurrection and this is what he said, “unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in this in his side, I will not believe.” He demanded to see before he believed, and Jesus said to Thomas, have you believed because you have seen me, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe. Faith is not to believe what you see, but what you cannot see. That’s why the Hebrew writer defined faith in this way. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Faith is the conviction of things not seen with eyes of faith, we accept what we cannot see. St Paul confessing this way. “We look not at what can be seen, but at what cannot be seen.” I mean these great people are so different from us. St Paul and all, Helen Keller, all these people, they were able to see what cannot be seen? What ordinary people cannot see, these people were able to see.

## **To See**

The beauty of being able to see what you cannot see is that you find treasure in life. I mean what we see in the world in our life is only 10 percent. Ninety percent of the life that we are experiencing is what we cannot see. But you feel only if you live only seeing what you can see you’re living only 10 percent, but when you’re able to see what you cannot

see it, you can find the treasure. You can find the beauty in life because beauty is hidden in what we cannot see. For example, our outer nature, no matter how beautiful you are, you may be, as you get older, a belly comes out and a hair gets grey and then you get wrinkles. Your outer self is naturally wasting away, no matter how much I try, so I don't like to get taken pictures anymore. So, I run away whatever people put the camera on me, I run away because when I look at the mirror, sometimes it's okay, but when I look at the picture, it comes out exactly as it is. That's why I don't want to see.

So, our outer nature, you can see so clearly that you're wasting away. You're being wasted away. Every year is different. When you get to near 60, you will experience that when you're in 20's is okay, 20 or 23 years, still beautiful. But when you become 60, 61, 60 something, make so much difference. But. But it's important. But St Paul saw the inner self. Inner self is what you cannot see. Your inner self is being renewed day by day. He saw that. He saw what cannot be seen. He saw the inner self-being renewed day by day. And also, the house that you built on this earth. No matter how beautiful you may've designed, after 10, 20, 50 years, it becomes decayed and destroyed. St Paul saw that, but the when the earthly tent is destroyed, he saw what cannot be seen. That is the home in heaven that you can never destroy. That home, that house, not built with human hands, but built by God will never be destroyed.

That's why Saint Paul said, I don't lose heart even though my outer nature is being wasted away and even the earthly tent is being destroyed. I don't lose my heart because I have an inner self. And also, I have a home that is eternal in heaven.

## **Thankfulness**

If he looks at only what we can see, we'll lose heart. But when we see what we cannot see, we can get confidence. Last week was particularly difficult for me because one of my friends actually he was very close to me. Lee Soo Chul jundosanim. He was not just jundosanim. He is my golf buddy and he's a wonderful man, so we spend a lot of time together, we share a lot of things together. His wife had a heart condition, so he was always concerned about his wife's health. So, he always went home and made sure that she was okay and her a heart, she had a heart attack about 30, 35 years ago when she was giving birth. So, she always, all her life, she

lived with a heart condition and all of a sudden, last week, she couldn't handle that anymore. She has three heart attacks that morning. And then when I by the time I visited her, she wasn't conscious. She wasn't able to survive.

I had a really difficult time, doing the funeral, you know, whenever we had, you know, the staff, she really took care of us very well. She was a good cook and she always made new food and let us taste it and enjoy it and all that. And so, I miss her terribly, but his family came from Chicago to attend a funeral and his sisters also came and then his younger sister somehow got very stressed and she passed away yesterday. And so I went to hospital and I did the final rite. Then they have to send that a body to Chicago and then they will have a funeral here and there and before he can even a grief for his own, wife. Now he has to get to Chicago to grieve for her, his sister's death. I mean, how can you handle that? How can you handle that kind of a tragedy, the tragedy in your life? How can you survive? Yesterday, I went to the hospital and then he held my hand and then he said, "thank you, thank you for being with me. And thank you for doing the final rite for my sister." And he said, "I'm out of my mind right now. I can't think." But with tears, he really thanked me. Where did he have room to thank other people.

That thankfulness is faith. That thankfulness. This morning when I arrived at, at a church, he was there waiting in the parking lot for me before he left for Chicago. He came to tell me, "thank you." What a great person. I mean he came all the way from Scarborough just to see me, to thank me. IT's like the 10 lepers getting healed and one came back and thanked Jesus. The same way.

If he lives with only what he can see, he'll lose heart. But, he was able to see what cannot be seen. That's why you didn't lose heart. The Cross, we can see. The suffering, we can see. But the resurrection, we cannot see. The glory. We cannot see. In this life, we not only see suffering, but we also see glory. We not only see the cross, but we also see the resurrection. People with great minds and great heart, they live seeing what cannot be seen. That's how they live. When their situation is totally helpless and hopeless, and they cannot see anything hopeful they saw hope which cannot be seen.

## Things He sees

They saw treasure hidden in the field when most people cannot even see that there's a treasure in the field, but they see the treasure in the field and they sell everything that they have and then they buy the field. Sometimes in life, like jundosanim, we look around, we cannot really see what's ahead of us. It's like a foggy road, you don't see an inch, but you have to move on, but you cannot see anything because suffering is so much. The pain is so much. The sorrow and sadness, that is so much that you cannot see anything beyond an inch. That was the experience of Job. This is what Job said. "If I go forward, he's not there or backward. I cannot perceive him. On the left, he hides. I cannot behold him. I turned to the right, but I cannot see him.

Job Felt total desperation. He lost his children. He lost his health, he lost his possession, he lost everything in life, and then he cannot see anything. Forward, backwards, right or left. He could not see anything. But Job said. But. This but is important. Right after he said that: "I cannot see everything" he said, "but he knows the way that I take. When he has tested me, I shall come out like gold." What a confession. What a great mind. What a great person. That's a greatness of Job. Because of suffering, he cannot see anything, but God sees me. I cannot see God, but God can see me. That's what he knew. That's hope that we have. I cannot see God, but God can see me.

There's a fire in the house. Everybody rushed out and then the father and the mother, they all rushed out, run, run, run. They all came out and the father thought that everybody came out and then he looked up and there was a son in the second floor at the window. And the father said jump and the son said. "Dad. I cannot jump because I cannot see you" and the father said, "but I can see you." But I can see you.

## Reflection

That's where the hope is. We cannot see God, but God can see us. When we are suffering so much that we cannot see anything ahead of us, but God can see you. And God will bring you out.

My friends, what can be seen is temporal, temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. Hold onto what's eternal. Don't hold onto things that are



here for a while and vanish but hold onto things that are eternal. When you cannot see anything, still you got to move on because God sees you. This is what Martin Luther King Junior said in his sermon. "Fly as high as possible. If you cannot fly, run. If you cannot run, walk. If you cannot walk, crawl, but don't ever sit down and give up. Move on. Don't ever stop your journey." We got to move on even though we cannot see anything in life.

# Let's Plant the Kingdom of God

June 17, 2018

Mark 4:26-34

## Challenges to Plant the Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is what we plant. The Kingdom of God is not just given to us. It's something that we plant, it's a like a new kind of concept, new idea but I discovered that from this passage. Ah, Kingdom of God is not just given to you or is not just coming to you? The Kingdom of God is something that you plant, every day. But in planting the Kingdom of God, two things that you have to remember and two challenges you have to remember the first one is: the growth of the Kingdom of God is not visible. Once you plant the seed in the soil because it's under the soil, you cannot see the seed growing. It is just there, but you're not sure whether it's doing anything. Sometimes we feel when we see the progress that we get energized, we feel like, wow, something is happening. Something's going great, so you work harder, but when you don't see any result for what you do, sometimes you wonder; what I do, does it make any difference? When we feel that we feel like giving up, we get discouraged when we don't see the result, but today Jesus gave us the very important truth and that truth is the earth produces of itself.

## God only can give the growth

It is not us, which makes the seed grow, but it is the earth itself. Once you've planted, then the earth will take care of it, the soil will take care of it. My job is to plant the seed and it is the job of the soil to make it grow, and that truth Jesus told us and that truth is also spoken by an apostle Paul. He said, I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth so neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything but only God who gives the growth. Once we plant it. You don't need to worry about it, it is God who makes it grow. The second thing that you have to remember, the second challenge you have to remember is that from a mustard seed is so small. I don't know whether you saw most or not. I've seen a few, but when you really look at it carefully, you cannot really look at it, so small and this is what Jesus said, it is like the mustard seed, which when sown upon the ground, it is smallest of all the seeds on the Earth.

That is the what the Kingdom of God is like. Jesus is comparing the kingdom of God to the mustard seed. It is so small you cannot even see it well. Sometimes we wonder what we do for the Kingdom of God is so small. We are so small. We feel like we are not significant enough to be able to make any difference in the world. What difference can I make in the world? Sometimes we feel so insignificant. I'm the person who has only one talent. You know the parable of talents, the person who received one talent, two talents, and five talents. The people who received two talents, five talents worked really hard that produced double. Another two talents, another five talents. But the person who received only one talent, he didn't do anything because he felt that one is not good enough. One talent is not good, sometimes we feel like that.

### It is Small, but Will Grow Large

It is so small. What we do is so limited, so small, we feel discouraged and we easily give up, but even though it is small in the beginning when God touches it. It grows, it becomes a shrub. It becomes a big tree. So, under the shadow, the birds will come and enjoy that being under the shadow, even though you look very insignificant, not important enough, but when God touches you. Through you, you can give so much rest to many others. You can make other people, abundant. Not only is your existence becoming abundant but through you, many other people's lives will become abundant. When you really look at Jesus. Jesus never was never a political person or international person. He just stayed in Jewish land; Galilee and Jerusalem. A few times back and forth. That's all he did. His geographical boundary was so small, he only worked with 12 disciples, 12 people every day sitting down and teaching them and all that.

And in these 12 disciples were not really extraordinary leaders, they didn't understand what Jesus was saying, Jesus feels so frustrated, but he kept teaching them that small seed became the plant that changed the whole world. St Paul, he ministered few churches, but only 30-40 people, and even though, in that small group, there were so many problems. Sexual immorality and the fight and division, all kinds of problems he faced. But he wrote his letter every day, without really realizing that this letter will be a read two thousand years later, in Etobicoke by St. Timothy people. He never expected that. But he wrote it. He planted the seed and that seed became the giant scripture that everybody reads it and gets inspiration from it. Even though what you do, may look small, but when God touches it, that

can be the greatest shrub in the world that makes many other people abundant. Doing our best in our given situation. That is the attitude of planting the Kingdom of God. Let us plant the Kingdom of God daily in our daily lives.