



St. Timothy Presbyterian Church

LOVE

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Sermons

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God's Love in Parent's Love

May 10, 2015

1 John 4:7-13

The Core of the Christian Message

What is the core of Christian message? You see that in verse nine, he says, "God's Love was revealed among us in this way. God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him." That is the core Gospel, the core message of the good news. God's love was revealed that he sent his son into the world so that we might live through him. He was expressed in different ways from 1 John, but when you read the gospel of John, it was expressed in a different way, but probably in a more familiar way to you. It says, "for God so loved the world that he might, he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life." That is the core Gospel. And this time I realized, I mean, I heard this so many times, but this time I realized that this core message was expressed in terms of the relationship between the parent and a child.

That God's love was revealed in this way that God sent his only son to be sacrificed. How difficult that must have been for God. I'm not quite sure how God felt, or God feels because God is very different from us, but what John is trying to describe to us is this is how much God loves us. So, he uses our understanding of the relationship between parents and children and if you all are to do this, how difficult it must have been. God did that even though it's very, very difficult to do so. God did that, that much God loves us. That's what John is trying to describe.

God's Love

The most difficult thing for a parent to do is to sacrifice his or her only child because their child is the most precious thing in the world. So, to sacrifice your own child, that is the most difficult thing. You want to give everything to your children as what you want to do. The other day I was talking with my son and somehow a topic of giving came out and I gave him something. By text, I said, "Josh, I'll give you anything for you." He texted me right back

and said: "Thanks Dad, now I know what that means." I can give anything to my own son.

It is hard for a parent to sacrifice his or her child because they're the most precious thing in the world. But that was what God did for us. He gave his only son to die for us. That much, God loves us. That was what John said in verse nine. We'll read it again. "God's love was revealed among us in this way. God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him." Parental love was so special that John described God's love using parent's love. Probably among all the love you see in the world, the closest to God's love is the parent's love. So, when you read the ten commandments, the ten commandments can be sharply divided into two. The first four is about the love of God, that you are to love God. The next-five is about you are to love your neighbour, so love your God and love your neighbour, it can be divided into two. Right in between at the end of "demand for love for God", there is parent's love.

Maybe parent's love is in between love for God and love for a neighbour so it's right there. So, I think that closest to God's love in this world is parent's love. Parent's love is not reciprocal love, their love is not in response to the love they receive from their children. It is not two-way love, it is one-way love. In Korean, they call this love "내리사랑" (sending love), meaning to send love. Love never goes up, love always goes down, as the water flows down, the love always goes down. Of course, when the children do not appreciate the parent's love, they feel hurt and well they are, human beings too. They get disappointed and they get sometimes even frustrated and you, you're giving, giving, giving, and the children just take it and don't even appreciate it and take it for granted. Then the parents feel hurt. It's not because they wanted, but you know, they want their love to be appreciated. But that does not stop them from loving them. Just because they feel frustrated and hurt, that doesn't stop them from loving them. It doesn't matter what, the parents love is always constant.

Parent's Love

So, there is always somehow, pain, in a parents' heart, because children can never love their parents as parents love them. As I said, it's downward love, it can never go up. The children can never love as much as the parents love their children. So, like you cannot love God as much as God

loves us. It is downward love. No matter how much you try to love God, you cannot love God as much as God loves us. So, God's love and parent's love are always painful love. Jesus showed that painful love very well while he was on earth.

I thank God that God put his love in parents so that the parents, may love their children with God's love. Somehow God installed his love in parent's hearts so that parents can love the children as God loves us and we are thankful for that. Without that love, we would not have learned what it means to love and what it means to be loved since we were young. Our parents are the people who taught us the first love. As soon as we were born, they showed us the first love. So, through parents, as we grew up, we learn the love. We have survived the first few years because of that love.

When I was young, I was very, very weak and very picky about food and always sick, it was hard to even survive. So, my mother had to pay special attention to me whenever there's a party, she always took me to the party and it's because I didn't eat period. In Korea, bananas were very, very precious when I grew up, but here, bananas are very cheap. But when I grew up, bananas were not just around. But I was the only one who grew up with bananas. That's how I grew up and then I still remember a ringing in my voice. She always had me on her back and as she always said by singing "my child doesn't die on me, don't die on me" because I was always sick. I was so weak, and I still remember that voice ringing in my ears. I survived because my parents and my mother's love and my mother's love helped me survive. So, it is really to do with my mother's love.

I also experienced the same thing with my own child, when Grace was born. My wife has very unique blood and we didn't know when Josh was born because it was all fine. But after Joshua, an antibody formed and then it started attacking Grace when Grace was born. Since Josh was so easy, the second one, we didn't even think about it and we weren't worried. But at the end, the baby was dying actually in the mother's tummy. So, one day I got a phone call and the doctor said that this is an emergency case, you have to come right away. So, I went to the hospital and the doctor told me, "your daughter has a ten percent chance to live, do you want to do the C section right now or not, or just let her die?" I said, "of course, we'll hold onto the 10 percent, that's what we are going to hold onto." After that my wife was knocked out because she gave so much blood and then somehow,

we had to use mom's blood to do the blood transfusion and then the Jaundice Level was going up and up. If it started attacking the brain, then she'll get brain damage.

We were waiting and looking for blood everywhere. But there was nobody who had the same blood. So, from that moment on, I was praying like crazy every day, in the chapel and in the hospital. I was praying for the child and at that time I still remember thinking "I'm not looking for a healthy baby when I leave this hospital, I just want her to survive without big brain damage." That's what I prayed for. At the time I was living in downtown and I came home and there was another church member who actually who lived with us, she came from Montreal and she was there. So, I was in the washroom, running the water, her heart and how much I cried a why this happening? Uh, so I'm in. And then we finally found blood from Vancouver. So now when I came out, I came out with a healthy baby and now she's married and she's fine and living in Boston and all that stuff. You know, parents love, that's very special. As I experienced my mother's love, the children also experience a parent's love. We thank God for giving his love to our parents. We thank our parents, for their sacrificial love.

Love One Another

The true maturity is when you start appreciating the parent's love. This is what John said to us again, I'll read it, "Beloved says God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is perfected in us." Let us love one another. Love makes everything so beautiful. Love brings colour to our gloomy, dark world. Love brings healing. Love brings hope. Love makes our life perfect. If you don't learn anything in your life, the only thing that we need to learn actually is love. Even if we don't learn anything in the world, if we learn how to love, then you are perfect because love makes everything perfect. Saint Paul said this, "and now faith, hope, and love abide these three, and the greatest of these is love." That is the greatest, greatest wisdom, the greatest gift, greatest skill, greatest character.

Love. Let us love one another. Let us have a parent's heart. In Santiago, in the evening, some people went out and they gave me the key to wait for them and they didn't come home until 12, 12:30. I started worrying like parents, you know, waiting for children. The next day one Deacon came up

to me and said: "how much do we rent, we were like teenagers worrying about parents waiting for them at home and things like that." If we have a parent's heart towards each other, that's what love is. Let us build this community with the love of Jesus Christ shown in our parents.

Let us take this time and opportunity to be thankful for what our parents did for us, how much they have sacrificed, how much they have given up just to love us.

Regard Others as Better than Yourself

July 19, 2015

Philippians 2:1-4

The World We Live In

What beautiful advice for all of us. Regard others as better than yourselves. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit. Look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let us reflect on that a little bit. What great advice. I think this is what we are supposed to live with. If we keep this advice, the world we live in will become a better place. Obama in his speech for the nuclear negotiation with Iran said, "At the end, the world will be a safer place, safer world, the better world." That's what we want. If we take Paul's advice seriously, I think many of our relationships will become quite better. We know we live in a fragmented world, relationships shattered and broken, and I realized that we did not keep Jesus' advice or Paul's advice. We are tremendously influenced by the world unconsciously, without ever realizing how much we are controlled by the ethos and the thinking of the world. As Joshua shared, working 12, 15 hours a day, do you really think about what you are living for?

We are very much influenced and have to understand how much we are influenced by the world. We can't just let the world influence us. I think the world we live in is controlled by the power, everything is based on power. What is power? I don't think that it's just political power. For example, how rich you are, how popular you are, how well educated you are, how well you're doing with your career, how attractive you are, what race you are or what gender you are. All of these things make up personal power. We live based on the power that we have accumulated for ourselves, and from there we try to build relationships with others with the power that we have. That's why sometimes, you try to accumulate this power so that you can have the upper hand in your relationship.

Then you look down upon those who are less powerful and you're very nice to those as powerful or more powerful than you. You know my friends intrinsically, power has a desire to control and even control our relationships. We are so deeply entrenched in the power-hungry world that

we do that with each other too. Even among couples, they constantly have power struggles between each other. Even with friends there is power struggle. People who are enslaved by the power try to put others under you, under your control, and they don't even realize they are doing it. They have this automatic assumption that "I'm better than you" or "I should be better than you". No matter what, I'm better than you. They are not even aware of this assumption. Whether you're a religious person, or even in other areas, people use that. Even in religion, they use that to gain the upper hand. "I'm better than you, at least in my faith, in my spirituality", from that all kinds of prejudice begins: racism, sexism, ageism, classism, elitism, you name it. No matter how worthless a person may look, if we cannot uphold that person's human dignity, I think that's corruption. That's corrupted thinking. No matter how shabby and how pathetic this person may look, if you cannot uphold that person's human dignity, you have already corrupted your thinking.

Whether that person is a strong person, weak person, a waitress in a restaurant, or students in the airplane, no matter who they are, they all deserve your respect and human dignity.

Saint Paul said to "Regard others as better than yourselves". I think that's a remedy. This is so against the culture stream, culture trend in our society. I want to be better than you always. I worked so hard so that I can be better than you, but Paul said, "Regard others as better than yourself". That is so against the stream of our modern thinking, but I think that's the wisdom. I believe that's the truth, and I think that it is something that we need to hold onto. How can we regard others better than yourselves? It is hard to do because whenever we tried to do that, we felt miserable. When you consider other people better than you, you feel miserable. Is Paul telling us to live with this miserable feeling? I don't think so. Paul is saying that even when you regard others better than yourself, you don't need to feel miserable. That's not what should make you feel miserable. It's the way how you see things, the world and your relationship with others. When others do well, we have two contradicting feelings and emotions within us. On the one hand, we are very happy for them if their children are going to an Ivy school or if their children are doing a wonderful job and they are doing very well, you're really happy for them. On the other hand, you wonder, what have I been doing all this time? They achieved so much and

look at me, I have only done this. Right there, if you're not careful, you fall into self-pity and you start feeling miserable.

False Humility

Let us consider a totally different scenario. Let's say you feel that obviously you are better than the other person. You know, in terms of your singing ability, or in terms of your looks, or in terms of whatever, you obviously think that you're better than the other person. How can I consider the other person better than myself? Do I fake it? Do I say "Oh, you're better than me.", do I fake it? Paul said, "In humility, consider others better than yourself". Not in false humility. We all know false humility so well. We are fooled by false humility multiple times, to the point we're not fooled by false humility anymore. So, regarding others as better than yourself is not about comparing yourself with others and seeing who is better, it is our attitude towards other people. It doesn't matter who the other person is. We always, whether that person is a child, or poor and powerless, you always consider them as better than yourself. You put yourself under that person.

What is that called? When you put yourself under other people? What is that called? Servant. Exactly. That's what a serving mentality is all about. He says in the four verses you read from verse five, he said, have the same attitude as Jesus, and then he showed what Jesus said. Who thought he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave or servant, being born in human likeness and being found in human form. Paul boldly declares that Jesus took the form of a servant. I think that's a radical statement. Our Lord, the son of God, took the form of a servant. As Jesus became a servant to save the world, to make the world a better place, Jesus asked us to be a servant. That is the way of the disciples.

That is our journey. Our journey is not towards the power, to defeat and control the people. Our journey is a journey to the servanthood, where we put ourselves under others and serve them. That's what our journey is all about. We are not the people. We are Christians. We are not the people to rule, but, to serve. This is our philosophy. This is our principle of living. This is what Jesus said, "You know that among the gentiles, those whom they recognized as their rulers lorded over them and their great ones are tyrants over them, but it is not so, among you, but whoever wishes to become

great among you, you must be a servant. And whoever wishes to be first among you must be the slave of all. For the son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life, a ransom for many". My friends. This is a core of the gospel.

Be Humble

There are many good things in the Bible, but that is a core of what we believe. Core of the Gospel. If you lose this core of the Gospel, you lose being a Christian. If we lose this, we don't know what it means to follow Jesus Christ. If you're still trying to rule over other people and conquer other people, whether it's personally, nationally, or globally, then what we are doing is not Christian living. That's what's going on in the world right now, so we have to sometimes go against the stream of this world. Don't blindly follow what the world does, stand strong even though that is against the stream. People who think like that are corrupted in their thinking. They fell into the futile thinking and with futile thinking, you cannot do God's work. My friends, regard others as better than yourselves. When you deal with other people, look at yourself. Do you have this automatic assumption showing that I'm better than you because I'm a man? because I'm white? because I'm more educated? Because I'm more powerful? Or because I'm richer? Do you automatically assume that you're better than the other person? Catch it. You're influenced. You're influenced by the world's thinking.

Always regard others better than yourselves. Be kind to them. Be kind. Before they greet you, go first and greet them. Be nice to them. It doesn't matter who, always treat other people as though you are their servant. Only strong people can do that, like Jesus. Only strong people can do that. Weak people try to pretend that they're stronger, but confident people, the powerful, real strong people can kneel down and serve other people. We are not the slaves of power. We are the servants of love. We are not blinded by power, but we are awakened by the love. We don't build relationships based on power, but on love. We are born again. We are born again by Jesus' love. We are born again by Jesus' teaching. The first thing about being born again is to be a servant. That's the first thing, and that is the essence of our life. So, when you have lots of power, be careful. Don't make yourself greater than others with that, rather, use that, humbly, to serve other people and to serve God. Josh, that's why you're working 12 to 15 hours. Not just to accumulate power, but with that power, you can serve other people. That's the essence of spiritual living,

Reflection

Without realizing it, have we become a slave to power? So many times, we feel insecure because we don't have enough power. Or, because we have so much power, we have become arrogant. Let us pray that we are not slaves or servants of power, but that we be servants of love. Let us pray that God fill us so that we may truly become servants of love to serve other people and God.

BE AN ANGEL

September 20, 2015

1 Kings 19:1-8

Stories from the Bible

These days, I don't follow the lectionary. The lectionary is what the world churches use. It is a system of the collection of the scripture passages to preach every Sunday. They just give scripture passages. For the last 23 years at this church, I followed the lectionary, but from July this year, I have decided not to follow the lectionary. The reason was that I wanted to experience the moment where the world we live in meets the word of God, the scripture. I want to capture that moment where what I experienced in life, meets what I experience in the scripture, I want to capture that moment. The scripture that God gave to me this week was the story of an angel who took care of the Prophet Elijah. Just before this story, Elijah fought with Baal Prophets, the false prophets on mountain camel, he fought off 450 false prophets all by himself.

The Prophet Elijah

Elijah was a powerful figure in Israel's history. When you talk about prophets, it is Elijah. He was a representative person of the prophets. He even brought down fire from heaven, but after this, the King Ahab's wife, Jezebel was very angry because she was the one who brought all these false prophets to Israel, and she was angry that Elijah killed them all. She was wicked, and she wanted to kill Elijah, and that's what it's captured in first two verses of scripture that we read today. Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel both sent a messenger to Elijah saying, so may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them, by this time tomorrow. Elijah was a strong man, very strong man, but strangely, this threat caused great fear in Elijah.

He was filled with fear. He was terrified with fear. He got all kinds of challenges all his life and he was fine to deal with them and overcame all

these challenges, but this time, this threat really paralyzed him and made him so tremble with fear. The writer of First Kings recorded in this way. Then he was afraid, he got up and fled for his life, but he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die. It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life, for I'm no better than my ancestors. He's saying, enough is enough. I can't take it anymore. I can't take my mission anymore. I can't take my work anymore. I'm done. Just kill me here, I can't go on. I realized that is the true face of us human beings, we human beings are weak. We think we're strong, but we are very weak. We can pretend that we are strong. We can pretend that nothing affects me, but when we really come down to the bottom of it, we are very vulnerable, fragile, and weak. That's why St Paul described us as earthen vessel, that can be easily shattered and broken.

The Touch of the Angel

You know, at times we feel like we can do almost anything. I can deal with all kinds of things. I have so much confidence that I can do all things. But when we fail, sometimes we feel like we can do nothing. I just don't have any confidence to do anything properly and effectively. We lose all our confidence and say we're completely surrounded by worries and anxiety. Even about life we feel that way. Can I go on with my life? You know, that's who we are. Elijah was not an exception, but Jesus was like that too. He, during his ministry, he talked about his suffering and death all the time. He always said that I'll be delivered into the hands of the leaders and then they will kill me. He just spoke about his suffering, spoke about his death as a matter of fact. But the night before he died, all of a sudden, he didn't have that confidence.

That's why he asked God, can you take this cup away from me if you can, if you will? I cannot take it. Even Jesus said that. I think that showed the true nature of us human beings. To Elijah, who was paralyzed with fear, an angel appeared twice. The first time, the angel touched him and said to him to get up and eat. You know, touch is a very affectionate word. I don't know whether an English word will capture that as clearly, but in Korean, there is the word 어루만짐. 어루만짐 means touching with affection. So, the angel came and touched him, and when he got up, there was a cake baked on

hot stones and a jar of water. He ate it, but he could not get up. So, he lied down again and slept. The angel appeared to him again a second time. That's what God does. When we cannot get up the first time, God will send another angel, twice, three times, four times. Until we get up, God will send another angel for us to get up. The angel told him, get up and eat, and the next phrase is very important: "otherwise the journey will be too much for you".

You are not Alone

You have roads to walk! You have dreams to fulfill! You have work to do! If you don't get up now, you won't be able to finish your journey. You will give up in the middle of it. You'll sit on it! Elijah got up and for 40 days and 40 nights, he went to Horeb, the mountain of God. As we take our journey, sometimes we feel like giving up.

We have a spiritual journey to take. A beautiful journey to take. Sometimes when life becomes so hard and too difficult and challenges are beyond our ability to handle, sometimes we just say, God, enough is enough. I can't handle it anymore. I'll just sit here and whatever. Sometimes we feel like that. That's when God sends us angels, not necessarily angels with wings and the white robe. The angels come in very ordinary people. They don't even know that they are angels to us. They give us strength and courage to continue our journey. When we are tired and drained, they give us what we need. What Elijah needed was not truly the bread or water. That's not what he needed. What did he need? What Elijah needed was to not be alone. Bread and water are just signs, but by sending water and a bread, God showed Elijah that you are not alone.

I'm with you. You're not alone. I'm with you. God simply assured Elijah that he was not alone in that journey. Later, Elijah was complaining that I'm the only prophet that is left and I just don't know what to do, and this is what God said. We didn't read it, at the end of chapter 19, this is what God said: yet, I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed, and every mouth that has not kissed him. By saying it, he told you that he was not alone. There are 7,000 more people who are like you, and also, I am with you.

The Angels All Around You

When you're heavily burdened, when you're surrounded by darkness, and problems are too big to handle. When you're tired and drained, when you feel helpless and hopeless with life, God sends an angel every time. He never fails it. As I look back, I'm sure there were many, many angels who helped me. You are where you are because of these angels in your life. These angels helped you, encouraged you, supported you, empowered you sometimes and helped you. Not necessarily, they gave us big help, big money or big things, maybe very small things. They may be even strangers that you never saw again, or the people who are always with you and are always with an encouraging smile, encouraging words of encouragement. They may be your friends or maybe your parents, they may be your church members. God sends these angels to tell us that life is not just darkness. Life is not just misery. Life is not just cruel. They show that life is beautiful, that life is worth living, and through these angels we realized that life is worth living and life is beautiful. This week, that's what I realized. I realized that there had been many angels in my life. They get nothing from me, but they helped me, encouraged me, and they were very kind to me. Who am I, that they are so good to me?

Acts of Kindness

Just this week I got an email from somebody that I haven't met for 25 years or so. You know, I don't even go into Facebook. I don't use Facebook. It's there, and my face is there. That's why it's Facebook. And this woman sent me an email and then she said, oh you're a reverend and oh, do you remember and all that. And this is an old lady's daughter. And then she was telling me that her mother is still praying for me. The mother went through the cancer and she survived and she's still praying for me after 25 years. She made beautiful 냉면 for me when she was here. And then the daughter lives in New Jersey and the other one lives in Maryland and they sent me just to say hi, but she still prays for me! Why? Last Thursday, in the morning, you know, one of those days when you wake up gloomy, you wake up sad, you wake up kind of like "Oh gee". Thursday was one of those days. I woke up and I went to the dry cleaning to pick up my dry cleaning, whole full load of clothes in. And then as I enter into the dry

cleaning, a woman went “Hi!”. She was so glad to see me. “Hi!”, with a bright smile. So, we were talking, and it was so great just to chat and talk.

And when I tried to pay, she said, let me take care of this. This is my gift for you today. Why? She doesn’t even know me. And why did she do that?

Why do human beings do that? Why is she so kind? And then, I was thinking about all the angels in my life. And that’s how the motive of this sermon theme came. All the angels in my life. And on that same day, in the evening, my wife went to Ghana to attend a conference. So, I dropped her off at the airport and came back to church and work a little bit, and then I got to cook so on the way I went to the Korean grocery store. I was in the lineup and this woman in front of me looked behind and said “Hi!”. So, I said “Hi!” back. I mean, I don’t know her very well. I mean, I met her a few times before doing some activities. She’s not a member of our church and I don’t really know her. And then she said, let me take care of your groceries, and then she paid for me. The same day, twice! Wow! What a treat! But why? Why do people do that? When we look around, there are many angels. Really. There are many angels.

Helping Those in Need

Of course, the world is not like that all the time. The world can be a quite cruel place. We all feel sympathetic for the Syrian refugees. In Germany, people came out with a big sign, “Welcome to Frankfurt”. When I saw that, there were tears in my eyes. Why are people so kind to those who can just be a bother to them? Who can even be dangerous? But on the other hand, there is also a reporter like the one who kicked the young refugees, and the same woman tripped the father who was running away with his son. The reporter was fired and the man who was tripped and fell and he got help from a nice guy in Spain. The guy was the president of private soccer school and then he heard the interview of this man who was tripped and then realized that he was a soccer coach in Syria, so he wanted to help out.

So, he called a Spanish newspaper he wanted to find out his whereabouts and he found it. He was in Munich. So, he chose one student from his school who can speak the Arabic language and sent him to Munich with all the money and then he took him to Paris and to Barcelona and Madrid, and he paid for all the travel, living expenses until he got a job. What a nice guy.

Do you know what his name is? Miguel Ángel! When I read that the article, wow, it was perfect for my sermon! It is true that this world is full of violence, cruelty, coldness, and problems, but among them, there are angels, as we met so many angels in our lives, let us be angels to each other.

As we look around with intention, we will have many opportunities to be angels. As we are conscious of angels around us, our life becomes brighter. On Thursday, after that experience, when strangers come or when people come, is it another angel? Or you know, my life becomes brighter. But when I see them as enemies, we become hostile. As we see angels in each other, our life changes, but as you see enemies in each other, your life become hostile. See angels in each other and be angels. Sometimes don't you wonder because I'm sad, because I'm unhappy, because I'm miserable, I make other people also sad, unhappy and miserable? That's not what we Christians are supposed to do. And I saw some people doing that. For what are you doing that? God calls us to be angels to each other. Let us live our lives. Probably they are angels in your life. Let us thank God for them and also let us also be angels to the people around us.

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

October 4, 2015

John 15:9-15

Friends

It's wonderful to have friends, friends are beautiful gifts from God. Without friends, I don't think we could have survived in this cold and rough world. Because of friends, we could overcome our loneliness and because of friends, we had laughter and joy. In this tough life, we spend so much time with them and have so many experiences we cherish. Some of them are very crazy things to do. When we were sad, they comforted us and when we suffered, they suffered with us. When we are happy, they share the joy that we had and deep in their heart they truly were happy for us. Having friends is probably the most precious thing in the world. And because of our friends, our family, our life has been full and meaningful. So my friends, try to make as many friends as possible. There will be good for your life and if you have good friends, don't take them for granted.

Cherish them and in this community, make some new friends. Forgive one another, accept one another, understand each other and embrace one another. In doing that, slowly you will feel the friendship and then you can build the friendship. The Christian life is simple. The Christian life is nothing but being a friend to other people. You become friends with other people. That is what it means to live as a Christian. They don't have to be like me. They don't have to share my views, they don't have to have the same hobbies as me, age doesn't really matter. The race doesn't matter. We can be a friend to all kinds of people. Think about it, consider other people as your enemies and consider other people as your friends. If you see somebody and if you see that person as a stranger and as an enemy compared to if you see somebody and you take them as your friend, your life will turn out very differently. When you see other people as your enemies, you will become hostile and defensive, and I don't want to be hostile and defensive in the world. That's not the way for happiness. When you're continuously hostile and defensive to other people, you don't become happy. You don't look happy. Your face doesn't look happy when you do that. But when you take other people as friends, there's a warmth around you.

Love

No one is perfect, no one. As you get to know them, you see their weaknesses and their shortcomings. If you look at them apart from far away they look good, but when you become friends, you go closer and closer to them and then you see all the ugly things too. Shortcomings, weaknesses, you know. If you reject them because of that and turn your back against them because of their weaknesses and shortcomings, we will never be able to make friends. We'll never be friends with other people. There'll be no friends left for us. We have to learn to accept their weaknesses and embrace them. I think that's higher wisdom. You accept their weakness and their shortcomings and embrace them. I think that is higher wisdom. Less wise people will always look at negative things about other people, but smart people, the positive things and negative things they embrace. That's how they live a positive life. That's why they make so many friends.

Isn't that what love is all about? If you love somebody that is lovable what good is it? Anybody can do that. Who doesn't love Encarnacion and who doesn't love Bautista? Who doesn't Love David Price these days? Everybody loves them. Everybody loves them, right? So, if you love somebody that is lovable, anybody can do it. But if you're able to love the unlovable, I think that is true love. That's what the definition of love is, love the unlovable. When Jesus loves us, I don't think Jesus sees the lovable quality within us, and that is not the reason why he loves us. I believe that Jesus sees everything inside of us, all our weaknesses, shortcomings and ugliness within us even. And yet he loves us. And often I think that that is a miracle. God loves me even though he sees all about me and he still loves me. That's a miracle. In that way, love is a miracle. That is Jesus' love. Look at how he loved Judas, knowing that he would betray him.

The most beautiful scene is the last scene, the last supper. Jesus took the bread and gave it to Judas, knowing that he would soon go out and betray him. He did not reject him. Even at the communion table, he gave the bread to the person who will betray him. That is love, that is love, allowing him to betray him. That is the kind of love Jesus showed. Today Jesus calls us as his friends. This is what he said, "I do not call you servants any longer because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my father." By saying that we are his friends. Jesus

brought down all the barriers and the walls that exist between God and us. Now he considers us as his friend. He embraced all our shortcomings and weaknesses and calls us his friend, not because we became lovable and worthy all of a sudden to be his friend. He just accepted us and loved us and considered us as his friend. I think that's a radical statement. Jesus, as God calls us as his friend,

Then Jesus told us about the greatest love and this is what he said, "no one has greater love than this to lay down one's life for one's friends." That is the ultimate love you can do for your friends, and we Christians believe that Jesus did that for us. Jesus showed how precious we are through his death. That's what love is. Love makes a person precious. When you're loved, you feel appreciated. You feel preciousness. That's what love does. When you love somebody, you make that person so precious. If you hate that person, you make that person so miserable and low, but when you love somebody, then you make that person very precious. Making somebody so special and precious, and I believe that that is love. That's why proud people or self-centered people can never love. Because no one is more precious than them, no one is more special than them. They refuse to make any other person as precious as they are, so they can never love. They refused to consider others as precious. Jesus refused to call us as his friends. Now we relate to Jesus, not as a servant, but as a friend.

Rejection and Acceptance

You know, we have this fear of rejection, so we try so hard to be in. Nobody wants to be rejected. Kids who bully other kids know this fear very well, so they bully others by rejecting them, by isolating them, by excluding them. There's an expression popular among kids, "FOMO" and that is the fear of missing out. "Oh, so and so was invited to the party. How come I'm not invited? Oh, it looks like they're going somewhere to eat. How come they don't ask me to go?" That's the fear of missing out. That's why people want to be popular so that they can be accepted everywhere.

Strangely, people criticize Jesus, saying that he was a friend of sinners. He was a friend of sinners. Jesus was indeed a friend of sinners. He chose to be a friend of sinners. He chose to be a friend of the people who nobody wanted to be friends with. We should not limit our friendship to the people we like and the popular people, we should extend our friendship to those

who are alone and on their own. Our life will be richer. In my ministry. I like to be a friend to the people I minister to. Probably that was my philosophy from the beginning without realizing it. When I do visitations, they treat me like a friend and I appreciate it. Last Thursday I had dinner with an ESM couple and I feel like I met old friends and had dinner. It was a nice restaurant downtown, where only celebrities go. So, I said, that's the restaurant only celebrities go to and then she said, "you're the celebrity." So, we had a beautiful dinner. They are the ones who during their university time dated together and you know they came to my house because the movie was at seven o'clock and we still had 45 minutes to kill, so they just dropped by my house. So, all kinds of people came to my house and then we are all friends. That's how I have done ministry. There are people who might have known me for more than 30 years here, even before I became ordained. They were there, and they are still here.

Break Barriers

They are like good friends. It is important that we become friends with each other and that's what Jesus wants. Jesus said, "as I have loved you, love one another." We should break down the walls between us and restore our friendship. Many, many people live in loneliness. We all feel existential loneliness. God gave us this community and it is important that we go beyond our boundaries and build our friendships with each other. We should overcome our boundaries of cultural gap, age gap, language gap, and become friends by accepting each other. You don't have to be the same age to be friends. You don't have to have the same cultural background to be friends. You don't have to have the same financial status to be friends. Especially to those who don't have many friends in this community, we need to extend our hands, our friendship. We need to reach out. I hope that the newly elected elders exercise reaching out, extending the hands of your friendship to the people who come to our community. Instead of remaining in our little circle, we should open up our circle and go out and reach out. They can be friends you have known for a long time, but you may find a new friend too.

One of my good friends are more than 20, 30 years older than me, they are my golf buddies. Well, I've been playing golf with them for, I don't know how long, they are like my friends, the age doesn't matter. The culture doesn't matter. When we have a friendly attitude to other people, our life will change, and we can expand our experiences.

A lot of times the reason we cannot make friends is that we are the problem, not them. Maybe we have too much hurt, pain or anger to have friends, to have a friendly attitude to others. Remember, Jesus became friends with you and he wants you to reach out to others and make friends and be their friends. Make God bless you with your journey. As you make new friends all the time. Go out and make good friends in your life as Jesus was your friend. Let us sing together.

There have been many friends, who have supported us and who have been with us all our lives and now Jesus is our friend. Maybe sometimes we rejected our friends sometimes we turn our back against them because we saw their shortcomings and weaknesses. Let us pray that we may have a big heart to embrace all kinds of people as our friend.

I AM BELOVED

October 18, 2015

Scripture Passage Unavailable

Unwanted

I was thinking, what is the most important thing to remember for ourselves? What is the most important thing that we need to continuously remind ourselves with? I think the most important and the most beautiful thing is that we are the beloved. That is an unchangeable fact we are the beloved. I think that is the most important thing for us to remember. A lot of relational problems. I realized that happens because we don't have this understanding that I am the beloved, so whenever people criticize me and all that, it triggers that I am not beloved. That's why we react and that's why we get angry. That is how important it is for us to remember, accept and believe that we are beloved and then you know when I see a lot of shootings and all that. Behind it all I see they are struggling with the fact that they are not beloved. They are crying out for the attention. I mean deeply ingrained that I'm worthless. I'm not beloved, and this will be an experience in the world that we live in. It is hard to experience that I am beloved in the world that we live in. Whenever we experienced failures, we translate that into "Oh I am not beloved." Whenever we experienced rejection again, we feel that we are not a beloved and whenever we don't do very well, then people love me because I don't do very well.

And that is the kind of experience that we always have every moment, every day. So, it is hard to believe that I'm the beloved. Once I had a meeting and then there was a man in front of me, and then from the first moment, I saw him. His face showed me that he was very angry and all throughout the meeting I could see the man so angry and I was wondering how difficult it must be for him to always live with that anger. All, his energy will be wasted for that anger. Whenever we are reminded that we are not beloved, we get angry. We are angry with the people who remind us that we are not beloved. That's why so many people cannot take criticism well because criticism affirms that we are not beloved, so we become sensitive to criticism. A situation where we feel unwanted and rejected some tinge of the sign that I'm not welcome, I'm rejected. I'm not wanted, then all of a sudden, we overreact to the situation.

We are scared of being unwanted. We don't have to be popular, but we don't want to feel unwanted. That gives us a constant struggle to fit in. Not just young people, not just teenagers. Everyone. You know when I talk to older people sometimes I talk to them, I play with them. And then they tell me to thank you, but I didn't do anything. Why did you thank me? You know you play with the old people. I mean, they feel that nobody welcomes the old people. So, from young to old, they are all scared of feeling unwanted. You don't have to be popular, but at least we want to feel wanted. But I realized that nobody in the world can validate that I am the beloved.

Nobody, no group in the world can validate that I am the beloved more often people and the groups, they validate that we are not beloved. If we expect that from people or from the group or from the world will get disappointed and will become very unhappy. The more we try, the more we become enslaved to the need for the approval and the acceptance of people. While I was writing this sermon, I was thinking about Goins (Blue Jays player) and how bad it must have felt that triggered the whole thing. I didn't watch the game, but I read it in the news. How could he do that? I mean, I love that guy. He's my favorite (Baseball player). The kind of comment that he made, was very humble. "It is I who made the mistake and I have caught those kinds of balls many times, but somehow that happened." When Bautista (Blue Jays player) said: "What confusion, I don't understand what you're talking about". I didn't appreciate that. I felt for Goins (Blue Jays player) that evening, and also, I felt for Elvis (Baseball player) even though because of his mistake we won the game. They must have felt so bad that evening. The more we expect love from people and from the world, the more we will be disappointed, and we will be enslaved to their validation and I don't want to be validated by them.

God is Love

I realize it only from the source of love. I can validate that I am the beloved. Then what is the source of love? Today's scripture says, this love is from God, and then John begins with this beloved. He assumed that beloved, let us love one another. He calls us beloved, and then he says later, love is from God. That is a source. God is the source. Going one step further, he says, God is love. He just defines who God is. God is love all about God is love. There's nothing else but love. That's what God is. That's who God is. God is love through. Through love, God created this world and with love, God has led us and because of his love, he saved us. Every movement of

I am Beloved

God begins with love. That's who God is. We have so many distorted images of God, but God is love.

That's what John proclaims and that's what I want to proclaim. God is love. Today's scripture summarizes the work of Jesus Christ as what? As the manifestation of Gospel love. This is what he said, God's love was revealed among us in this way. God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. The fact that Jesus Christ came to us was also the revelation of God. Nothing else but the love of God. Jesus' life was the incarnation of God's love. Jesus was not just word becoming flesh, but the love of God becoming flesh. And John in chapter one, he said the word became flesh, but in chapter three he said that Jesus is the incarnation of God's love. In this way, he said this: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life". The fact that Jesus Christ came to us was God's love for the world. So, the fact that we are the beloved cannot be discovered by other people, but only from God. As we deeply meditate on God's love, we will discover that we are the beloved.

I am Beloved

As a matter of fact, I believe that every conclusion of our prayer should be I'm the beloved. Every prayer when we come out and say "Oh, I'm the beloved". Jesus Christ lived his life very, very busy. He had so many things to do every day. He was so tired at the end of the day and so exhausted. So, he went up to the mountain and then in the mountain he prayed, and then what would he receive at the end? In the end, he received that. You are the beloved. When Jesus Christ first began his ministry, what was the voice that he heard? What was the only voice he heard before he began the ministry, it was hearing this voice that he went into the ministry? This is the voice that he heard, and the voice came from heaven. You are my son, the beloved. That is the voice he heard. You are my son the beloved, hearing that voice he began his ministry.

The very basic thing that we have to first affirm to live our lives meaningfully is that we are the beloved, not just with our brain, not just with our heart, but in our gut. At the gut level, we have to know that we are the beloved. We have to build our lives on this unchangeable, immutable fact. The world constantly challenges us. Prove that you are the beloved. The

world always tells us, prove that you are the beloved. What is that? What does that voice prove? That you are the beloved? That is the voice of temptation. As soon as Jesus heard the voice, you are the beloved. The next thing Jesus heard was from Satan in the wilderness, a temptation. And Satan said if you are the son of God. In other words, prove that you're the son of God, the beloved. That's the voice of Satan. That is the voice of temptation. You don't need to prove that you are the beloved. Stop trying that. You don't need to prove that, accept it and believe it. When you're able to accept and believe that you are the beloved than the whole thing changes.

You know, when we understand that I am the beloved. Something amazing happens. You know what happens when I say that I am the beloved and I realized that you are the beloved too. When I deeply understand that I am the beloved. I understand that you are the beloved too. That's what love is. recognize and realize that you are the beloved. That's what love is. That's what loving one another means. Loving one another is not doing something for someone, but just to recognize you are the beloved too and that recognition only comes when you really know that you are the beloved. So, this is what the Scripture says, beloved, he already assumed, beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. It's not an order, but it is a matter of fact, as we know that we are beloved, we can also know that you are the beloved too and that is to love one another. Then we realize love is flow.

Love

Love is not just a feeling. Love is doing something, but you know, love is not just a verb. Love is not an adjective. Love is not a feeling. Love is not doing. Love is simply a flow. When you experience love and get absorbed into the love of God, that love just flows down to the neighbor and that truth who told us, Jesus Christ told us in the Old Testament, there is one verse that says, "love your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your mind. Love your God. That is the most important commandment," it's called Shema. It was the most important commandment in the old testament and so you put that word on your forehead, on your wrist, and on your doorstep. Everywhere. Love your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. Love your neighbor, you don't even see where that is in another context. Just love your neighbor and Jesus. Put these two together and love your God and love your neighbor. That is the most important thing in

your life. No rabbi taught that no rabbi did that. They were all in the Old Testament, but Jesus was the first one who put it together. Saying that you love God then it naturally flows into love with your neighbors.

I believe that knowing that you're the beloved is a moral responsibility. Once I said in the happiness seminar or a retreat, I said, being happy is a moral responsibility because when you're happy, only when you're happy, you can make others happy. When you're unhappy, it makes so many people miserable. So, I think these are moral responsibilities. When you're happy, you make other people happy. When you're unhappy, you make other people unhappy. Whenever I see shooting they're so unhappy and they make so many other people so unhappy. Make them miserable for the rest of their life. Not just one or two hundreds of people. Thousands of people were affected by their unhappiness, so being happy is the moral responsibility. Knowing that I'm the beloved is the moral responsibility. When other people criticize us and pinpoint our weaknesses and darkness. When we know that we are beloved, we don't need to overreact. We don't need to respond with such sensitivity. How people treat me. Criticism and nasty things they say about me. I don't need to respond if I know that I am the beloved, but when I don't know that I'm the beloved, then we'll react to that.

THIS CHRISTMAS

December 20, 2015

Luke 1:39-55

Childbirth

Whenever I see the pantomime, as John said, it brings a tear to my eyes. And what an important message that a pantomime carries that we're living in a very broken world where we finger point at each other. We can destroy the spirit of other people and God has come to bring peace and reconciliation, but we human being continuously do that. So, thank you again. And, I think it was written and the choreographed by Deb, you have a talent there and a good spirituality too. So maybe, you may think of doing it every month, make a kind of pantomime group, so every month and prepare a message and write it, and share with us.

Yesterday, I really enjoyed the Christmas concert, especially Hi-C. Wow. You guys are cool. I was so proud of you. You, you've done a really, really good job. Thank you very much. You know, Christmas time, we are celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. You know, childbirth is one of the most fascinating and miraculous things you can ever witness and experience in our lives. It is life's mystery. The life is born in a person's, in a womb, like a woman, you are blessed people that you can experience that we are witnessing to that mystery of life. I mean, the mysteries are around us. We can never take for granted the childbirth because whenever we see the birth of children, we experienced the mystery of God and the mystery of life. And today we'll baptize Emily and Yoona. And what we are doing is we are celebrating as the community for this wonderful mystery of God. I mean, these children were born with potential. These children were born for a specific reason, and God has blessed them. Otherwise, they will not have been born. God has blessed them, so they are a given birth in this world. So, we are celebrating his community, the mystery of life, mystery of God and the mystery of this community.

The Mystery of Life

Today's scripture passage, we see two women also celebrating the birth of two babies. And these two babies are very, very spiritual babies. They will

change the course of history in the way that we could never imagine in a radical way. They're both had impact, such a profound impact on humanity, on the history of this world, in the way that we can never imagine, you know. I wonder, without their messages, what will be like, this world? What would this world be like without their messages? People, I mean, this humanity will run into totally wrong direction.

And the message that these people, these two babies, proclaimed to us, continuously held, held in tension so that humanity doesn't go in the wrong direction all the way. Without these messages that the powerful always will exploit the weak and that they will take that for granted. But this message always held them in tension. And I'm really thankful for the message that these two babies to us, the birth of Jesus Christ is a birth of God's desire. Birth of Jesus Christ, his birth from God's message. That's what birth of Jesus Christ means. It was a very difficult reality for Mary, a teenager, being pregnant without marriage at that time. That was a difficult reality. What happened to Mary was what no ordinary woman would have experienced. She was an ordinary woman who experienced the extraordinary experience that no one experienced before, but it was hard to understand and hard to accept and hard to digest. But Mary saw the work of God behind this hard reality. In other words, Mary saw the mystery of God.

The mystery of life is this. Behind our harsh reality, there is a work of God. There is a reality of God in your harsh reality. If you see only harsher reality, you become harsh people, but behind this harsh reality, we see the work of God and that, I think that, is the mystery of life. I hope that we all experienced the mystery of life. Life may be difficult. Life is not easy. Life may be difficult, but behind this difficult life, there is work of God. That's why life is a mystery. How did Mary know? I don't know. That's another mystery.

How God Works

You know, when we see God working, we know who God is working. That is the mystery. Sometimes don't you experience that? Certain experience really a cause "Wow. God is working". Knowing that it's a mystery. We don't know how to explain that. There was no proof that we can provide, but we know that God is working. That itself is a mystery. That's why Mary

came to Elizabeth, with her relative, who also experienced that mystery of life. So, she wanted to share that mystery with her relative Elizabeth. The community is people who have experienced mystery. We come together here, and we share our mystery with each other. And so, Mary went to see Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth saw

Mary, she knew that something wonderful was happening because the baby in Elizabeth womb leapt for joy. That is a mystery. When you have children, that children give a message. You know, when my wife was pregnant, she was crazy about steaks. Every night she wanted steak. And Joshua loved steak. And the second baby, all of a sudden, Grace loves lobster and she was looking for lobster everywhere!

It's a mystery! Whatever child in that womb recognized that John, in Elizabeth womb, recognized the work of God and recognize Jesus. So Elizabeth, blessed Mary, for she was the carrier of God's mystery. This is what she said. Blessed are you among women. And blessed is the fruit of your womb. How wonderful it is to bless each other in all blessings, blessing each other means recognizing God's work being done in the person we bless. That's what blessing is. Blessing each other means recognizing God's work being done in the person you bless. For example, I bless you. Then I recognize that God is working in you. That's what we do. I think we should bless each other all the time. We should recognize that God is working wonderful things in your life. We should do that more often. Why don't you turn around and say the blessing? Just turn around and say the blessing. Yeah, let's see. Let's see.

Mary's Magnificat

We should do that more often. You know? Instead of cursing each other, we bless each other, right? We should recognize God's wonderful work being done in each and every person's life. Then Mary magnified the Lord. Mary, somehow, something inspired her. It was not what she saw in reality. What she saw, in reality, was not really what she confessed right now, but she magnified the Lord. In other words, the message that was impregnated in her kind of came out of her mouth and that was God's message, and this was what she said. God has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts and God has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted

up the lowly. God has filled the hungry with good things. God has sent the rich away empty.

This is a message Mary saw when she had baby Jesus. This was what Jesus was supposed to do. It was not the reality she saw around her. Soon she would experience hundreds, thousands of innocent children being massacred. That was her reality. It's not what she saw, but that was a message, God's message. That's what God would do in any situation. God will bring down the powerful, send away the rich empty, but God will lift up the lowly and will fill the hungry with good things. What wonderful news. It is wonderful news, but not to everyone, as John said. People who continuously exploit and punish and persecuted the innocent, to them, this message is not a wonderful message. This message is a scary message. A threatening message.

In the 1980's, the government of Guatemala, they prohibited Mary's Magnificat to be recited in public. By law, they prohibited that you should not recite Mary's Magnificat because it was too subversive to them. The message was too dangerous for them, but to us, this is good news, a wonderful message. It is a declaration that the power-hungry world is not the world that God has in mind. The power-hungry world is not the world that God wants to design. God wants to design the world where we bless each other, we encourage each other, and we build up each other. As the pantomime clearly articulated, going finger point at each other, even Hi-C among you. There are some popular people. That's a power.

Reflection

Don't exploit the unpopular people in your group. Lift them up, rather than just admiring the popular people. People who are not that popular, people who may not be that talented, lift them up. That is a message of Jesus Christ. We continuously have to lift them up, even around us, among us. There are weak and vulnerable people around us. We take care of them. And that is the message of Christmas. That is the message of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, this time, let us celebrate the birth of these two infants and let us baptize them. That is our way of celebrating the birth of these children.

LOVE MAKES ALL THINGS BEAUTIFUL

February 14, 2016

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Love

Of God's love, John goes one step further. He said, God is love. You don't just see the trace of God's love. For God is love, so whoever does not love does not know God because you can only know God through love like this year's theme is press on to know God, but with own love. We can never know God. You cannot know God intellectually. You cannot know God by feeling it. You can only know God through love. Love is like a key to the door of Gospel world. When you don't have that key, you cannot open the door and you cannot see God to enter into garth's world and to know God. Only way to know is the love. There's a lot of people don't know God because the traitor Noga through Internet. You can only know God through love and whoever loves also knows God because God is love. Life is all about love. God is all about love, nothing less, nothing more. God is all about love and that's why Jesus Christ came. It's very simple why Jesus came. Jesus came simply to show us that God loves us. That's why Jesus came. That's the only knowledge that I can know.

Jesus came to show us that God loves you and God is Love. John 3:16 that you all know, for God so loved the world, for God so loved the world that he sent his only son, Jesus Christ. For God so loved the world. You're just very clear and then John in the gospel makes it clearer. He says this, God's Love was revealed among us in this way. God sent his son into the world so that we might live through him. The Gospel Love was revealed Molars and by sending Jesus Christ to Os. First Corinthians chapter 13 is a beautiful chapter about love, but this chapter has to be read in connection with chapter 12. Without chapter 12, 13 doesn't stand-alone. Chapter 12, Paul talks about the gifts of the spirit, gift of tongue, gift of prophecy and gift of all kinds of gifts that he talks about and he teaches about gifts. But at the end of chapter 12, this is what he said, but strive for the greater gifts and I'll show you a still more excellent way. That's how he ends. Chapter Twelve and goes into chapter 13 about love. Strive for the greater gifts and I'll show you a still more excellent way.

I don't think Paul is saying that love is the greater gift. I don't think so. Try for more gifts or the beautiful gifts. But what he's saying is love is the best way, most excellent way to use our gifts. So whatever gift you use, if you use it, that becomes the most excellent. If every gift of teaching, if you do that with love, that gift of teaching becomes the most beautiful gift. If you have a service, then if you do that with love, then that service becomes and that that devotion becomes most beautiful. Devotion in a service doesn't matter what you're doing in your life. But if you do that with love, that becomes a most precious thing. You may not work in UN human are working the universities. And you may just do labor work, whatever. It doesn't matter what you do. If you do that with love, then that becomes the most precious thing. But even if you do the most honorable job in the world, if you don't do that with love, that becomes nothing.

If I preach to you every Sunday with love, then that becomes the most precious thing to me. And for me, that's what love does. Love completes what we do. Love makes everything perfect. Paul saw that very clearly when he said this in 39, he says, for we know only in part, we prophesied only in part. That's the only part, but when the complete comes in other windows, love comes. The partial will come to an end and will become complete. Love makes everything complete. When love touches it, everything becomes complete. When love touches knowledge, the knowledge it becomes complete. When love touches our devotion, our devotion becomes complete. When love touches our faith, our faith becomes complete. When love touches our life, our life becomes complete with our love. You can never experience the completeness of life if we want to experience the completeness of life, we have to learn to love. Jesus was once asked by people, what is the ultimate goal of life? And Jesus said, simply love your God and love your neighbor as yourself. Love does what you just said, the ultimate goal of life. Love your God and love your neighbor as yourself. I realize when there is love, there's a perfect harmony between God, me and the neighbor. When did it? There is no love. It becomes all disconnected, but when there's love, there's a perfect harmony between God, me and neighbor. That's what she's a see. Harmony of life comes from love.

Lack of Love

Narcissism. I believe that is a critical illness in the modern world. Self- Obsession narcissism is the greatest enemy that we have to fight against in

the modern world. I think many, many people suffer from narcissism. Sometimes spiritual narcissism, political narcissism, or any other kind of narcissism, narcissism all around me. I think narcissism is the greatest enemy of the modern world, but narcissism, unfortunately, is not self-love. Narcissism comes from the lack of self-love, lack of love, an emptiness of oneself. If you love yourself so much, then you don't need to be obsessed with yourself. You can't forget about yourself. Rather you can let go of yourself when you love yourself so much. Well, cause his narcissism is a lack of love. We feel for ourselves. When true love comes, narcissism will go. When true love comes, we can accept ourselves as we are, and we can embrace our neighbors and we can accept Gospel love my friends. Love isn't a feeling so some somebody said, love is a verb. Love is an action. No love isn't that action either. Love is simply accepting cost, love. That's what love is. Love is the orientation to life.

There are only two orientations in life. One love the other power. Are we going to live your life with power or are we going to live your life with love? A lot of people know how to live with the power so they accumulate power so they, so they can live a good life, so they only know how to live with power, but you better learn to live with love. Then your experienced tremendous empowerment. Courage, Paul Tillich said courage to be. When you learn how to live with love, then there is a courage like Jesus to the cross. He was confident he did not send it to anyone. He was powerful, strong because of love. Thank you. When you learn, learn to live with love. You can live with confidence. You don't need to suffer from insecurity or inferiority complex. When you live with love, when you learn to live with love, you will experience tremendous power. Love begins. Accepting Gospel love. We are not patient, but we can accept God's love that is patient and then we'll learn to be patient. We are envious or boastful and arrogant and rude, but we can accept God's love in Jesus Christ that is truly humble.

What we Love

Then we will learn to be not envious, not boastful, not arrogant, and not rude. We have loss of anger within us, but we cannot accept God's love that is not irritable or resentful and we would learn to be gentle, kind and merciful. Love begins by accepting God's love and love will change us. Love has the power to change us these days. I'm reading a biography of Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson. Steve jobs was a born from German, a

mother and then Syrian father and as soon as she was born, they cannot raise him. So, he was adopted by this family jobs and he had a turbulent life when he was a child. He wasn't interested in school until his fourth grade when he met a very special teacher. Imagine a Teddy Hill. She saw Steve and then saw him a gift to them with many talents and intelligence and gifts. And then you will waste. She saw him, but he doesn't do anything.

He did not really live his life fully, but he saw potential. She saw potential in him so much he. So, he tried to do. She's tried to do all kinds of things to make him a really living life fully. But you can do that. And then she used to bribe him. I'm sure that beyond a doubt that is not the best way to teach. I know that that's not the best way to teach. That's all she could think of. She used a bribe. She gave a set of math questions to Steve Jobs to do it. And when he brings it next week and there are answers, then she would give him a large candy. And then she said, I'll give you \$5. And it's Steve Jobs. He got the math question very easily. He just finished all the problem set and then give to her. But later he said I did all the homework every week when she gave the math questions. I did all the math questions. Not Because of candy or money, but because I wanted to please her. But that is what teachers love. A troubled kid changed his life. If she weren't around, I don't think I would have written my sermon on the computer that he created. Love makes life beautiful. We human beings have to learn to live again now with power, but with love. We have to learn to live with love and then I hope that you do that and then share that insight with each other. The life the world would become a much better place as we learn too. As you live with power, the world becomes ugly, but as we learned to live with love the world, all of a sudden change becomes a beautiful place to these Valentine Day.

Reflection

So why don't you turn around and say Happy Valentine's? Don't be shy. Say, Happy Valentine. Can we say once more this time around? I'm sorry, but I love you. Why don't you turn around and say, I love you? Joy is so serious about telling. I love you too. Jacob Law. Isn't that supposed to be voluntary? It's not supposed to be a romantic a day. Actually, people turned it into a commercialized day. Love is supposed to remember Saint Valentine who was martyred during Roman times an around the fourth century, he sacrificed his life for fellow Christians. So, he became the same. Valentine. He sacrificed his life for the people who are, who suffer under

Roman power. He learned how to live with love, not with power. He didn't obey the power of the world. He'll be to the commandment of love. We thank all those who sacrificed their lives out of their love for people. We thank our parents who sacrificed their lives out of love, out of their love for their children. We thank all of those soldiers who sacrificed their lives out of their love for their country.

Most of all, we think Jesus Christ who sacrificed his life out of his love for humanity, my friends, you're talented, gifted. Just learn how to live with love. You'll make all the difference in a life.

BEING HUMBLE AND BEING HUMBLLED

February 21, 2016

Philippians 2:5-11

John 19:1-11

What it Means to be Humble

What does it mean to be humble? There's a lot of distorted images about being humble, so today I'd like to think together with you what it means to be humble. People misunderstand humility. It is not necessarily self-pity. What does humility look like? It is hard to talk about humility in a concrete way because we now question what it looks like when it is in our daily lives. What do humble people look like? Sometimes it's not quite clear. Also, humility is not a quality that modern society values very highly.

Modern society does not look at humility as a very important quality for their lives. They see no useful value in humility. I mean, humility is okay in interpersonal relationships, but how does that make my personal life happy and meaningful? Does humility do anything for that? Confidence? Yeah, we can see confidence is very important. Confidence is more important than humility they say. Being capable? If you are capable in doing things then you can be happy, you can do a lot of things very well. So being capable is more important than humility. Being admired by people? You know, people love you and people admire you, people adore you. That boosts my self-esteem, that is really good, so being admired is more important than humility. Being humble? That is a sign of weakness and admitting that we are weak is not necessarily an easy thing to do for modern people. We want to be strong. Modern society recognizes the value of strength. You have to be strong rather than being weak. Humility is a sign of weakness, so I don't want to be humble.

We have to ask, is humility or being humble, a sign of failure? Is humility, a trait of weak people? Is humility a natural result of being defeated? "You're not as popular as other people so you have no choice but to be humble. You're not as successful as others so you have no choice but to be humble." Humility is the natural result of being inferior, being defeated, failing?

Jesus was not made Humble

When I read Jesus' life, we know that Jesus is humble, and Paul said that Jesus is very humble, but I don't see that kind of weakness in Jesus' life. I don't think Jesus was humble because he failed. To Jesus, humility was not a sign of failure. I don't think Jesus became humble because he was crucified on the cross." A humiliating death made him humble." I don't think so. It's not that Jesus failed everything in life and had no choice but to be crucified, and as a result he became humble. I don't think that's what we believe about Jesus. Jesus was not made humble. Jesus chose to be humble. Jesus was not made humble. Jesus chose to be humble. Jesus chose to take the cross and Jesus chose to empty himself and Jesus chose to become a servant. That was his choice.

Why? Because that's what big people do. Being humble, that's what big people do. People who see bigger things in life can be humble. Jesus was so big that he didn't have to boast about himself. He had everything, so he didn't have to boast about whatever he had. He didn't have to prove himself to the world. Jesus clearly knew who he was, he was the son of God. He didn't have to prove or show to the world who he was. To Jesus, humility was not a sign of failure or defeat, but a sign of greatness. Jesus knew himself very well.

Jesus Lived as He Was

A lot of us depend on other people to tell me who I am. If they love me I must be lovable. If they admire me I must be admirable. They all praise me, I must be good at whatever I do. We always depend on other people to prove who we are or to know who we are. Jesus did not have to depend on other people to tell him who he was. He knew who he was, and he simply lived as he was. That's humility. Jesus knew who he was, and he simply lived as he was. He didn't live to inspire other people, or to really show other people who he was. He just simply lived as he was. He didn't have this distorted sense of ego. He didn't have to hide his weaknesses with his bloated ego. We do that all the time. When we have insecurity, when we have inferiority within us, we try to cover it with this bloated sense of ego, but Jesus didn't do that. He didn't seek for people's approval either. That's why he was hated. He didn't seek for people's approval. He was free from that. He was very comfortable with himself and lived comfortably as he was.

Humility is the Power to be Yourself

I realized, humility is the power to be yourself. Humility is the true power to be yourself. It is different from the power the world bestows upon us. It is the power that comes from within. It is not the power other people give me externally. It is the power that comes from within and that is when you know God, when you know his power, that power comes from within, and from that power you can be yourself. That is what humility is. True humility does not beg for the power the world gives because they already have enough power within themselves. True humility does not get sucked into power because it knows true power. True humility does not bow one's head before the power of the world. That's why Jesus was crucified. Because he did not bow his head to the power of the world. He could have sucked up to the power of Pilate and asked for salvation, "save my life." Pilate saw all kinds of people. He crucified so many people, so he knew how to scare them. Pilate approached with that power and he tried to scare Jesus. Jesus was not scared. Jesus was not threatened. And then Pilate asked, what kind of person are you? You are different from others. I could scare them! They were begging for their lives from me. You don't do that.

So, Pilate asked Jesus, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have the power to release you and the power to crucify you, and you refuse to speak to me?" And this is what Jesus said. "You have no power over me unless it has been given to you from above." Jesus saw different power. The power from above. Pilate said Jesus was innocent three times in the scripture. If you know that the person is innocent, and you have the power to release, then he should have released Jesus, but ultimately, what does he do? He handed him over. He had no power to release Jesus. He didn't even know that he had no power to do so. Jesus did not at all bow to the power of Pilate. He was strong. He was not afraid. That is what true humility looks like.

Be Humble and Stand Tall

Humility that comes from being humbled, if you're humble because of your situation, because of a failure, that humility can disappear very quickly when the situation disappears. But humility that comes from a clear sense of who he or she is will never disappear. Always the same. Just because you're highly exalted, you will not become proud. Just because you're

humbled and crushed, you will not feel miserable, pitiful, and small. Only in humility we can live an authentic life. When we have humility, we will be able to live with confidence in all situations. We can stand tall in all situations. Nobody can make me small. We will not be shaken by how people treat us. In humility we can overcome our conflicts with ourselves and we can be truthful to ourselves and in the end, that is the way to be truthful to God.

As we are comfortable with ourselves we can be comfortable with others too. I wonder whether that is the way to be happy and meaningful. Humility I realized is an essential quality to live a happy and meaningful life. May God bless you with Jesus' humility. Live confidently knowing that Jesus is with you and He called you, and God called you. You are my beloved child. That's all that matters.

Suffering Brings Healing

February 28, 2016

Isaiah 53:4-6

Suffering for Others Sufferings

I'm wondering what Christian saviour looks like, what Christian Messiah looks like. I think Isaiah portrayed Christian Messiah very clearly. He carried our diseases, was wounded, was crushed upon him and was the punishment. That's what Christian Messiah looks like and that is the Messiah we believe in, that is a core of our beliefs in a gloomy picture. That is what our Christian saviour looks like. There is a profound truth here. Our saviour suffered for our suffering. That's what our saviour looks like. Our saviour suffered for our suffering. Isaiah said he was wounded for our sins, that's what our saviour did. This week I meditate on the saviour who suffered for others, suffering that is so beautiful. Anybody suffering for others suffering, that is the most beautiful thing that you can see. We see that in our parents. The parents truly suffered for the suffering of their children. In the YF meeting many parents shared about parenting and all this stuff. At the end, this was what I said, "There are a lot of things that you can do for your children, but I'd like you to do just do one thing, suffer with them when they're suffering". Just simple, suffer with them when they're suffering.

Our parents did that. They suffered when we suffered. They cried when we cried. They knew that we could not say everything that we went through, but they just didn't even ask questions. They just felt it in their body. So that is the concrete example that we see about human beings suffering for others suffering. But you may say that, oh, they're not really others. you know, children are their extensions, but still what parents did was admirable and I'm always forever thankful for what they did for us. You know, suffering for others suffering, that is the highest value and noblest ideal and the most admirable action a human being can emulate. That is what we Christians believe at the core of our belief.

The Gift of God

God saw the suffering of human beings because of their sins, and he sent Jesus Christ and Jesus suffered to heal us from our suffering. That's what we believe at the core. What is more amazing is that Jesus did not suffer for the noble, worthy or great people who are worthy enough for others to suffer for. This is what Saint Paul said, "For while we're still weak at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. Christ died for the ungodly, not for the respectable people. Not for holy people, not for godly people, but Christ died for the ungodly". Sometimes we say, why should I suffer for people like that? they're not worth it. They don't deserve my sacrifice. They don't deserve my suffering. Why should I suffer for people like that? We say that, but Jesus died for the ungodly, regardless of who they were, doesn't matter. They can be worthless people. They can even be people who give you a hard time regardless of who they are, Jesus simply suffered for the people who are suffering, doesn't matter what costs, doesn't matter for what reason. Maybe for their own sins and maybe their own reasons, but it doesn't matter who they are, just for the people suffering. Jesus suffered. You know it's like a tree that gives shade to the tree cutter in the summer who comes up. He's about to cut that down, cut down the tree, and he just wants to rest before he does that. And the trees still provide shade.

How can we suffer for those who give us a hard time? And why should I suffer for them? You know, sometimes I realize this, the people who gave me a hard time, I realized that they were suffering from their own pain. I didn't know that before, why couldn't I understand that? what did I do to you? why do you make me suffer? That's when I realized that they are suffering from their own pain. When I saw that, I was able to embrace and understand that they are suffering. That's what Jesus said on the cross, Jesus said "Forgive them for they do not know what they're doing". In other words, they do not even know what they're suffering from. They are not even in touch with their own pain and they're putting their suffering onto me. Forgive them. I think that's what Jesus is implying. They were not even aware of their own pain and suffering and they imposed their suffering onto Jesus. Suffering for others suffering. That's a healing that happens, healing is not powerful people correct the powerless, weak people. Healing is when powerful people empty everything they have and suffer with the powerless people. That's when healing happens.

Isaiah said this “By his bruises we are healed, by Jesus’ suffering, we are healed”. I realized that, oh, there is a powerful healing in the suffering for others suffering. People don’t like suffering. People run away from suffering. People reject to be suffered, we are scared of suffering, but you know what? When you’re scared of suffering or you’re running away from suffering, you become victims of suffering, and you become enslaved to your own suffering. Only way to deal with our suffering is to go through the suffering, not to go away, not to go sideways, but through it. Only through the suffering we can overcome our own suffering and especially when you are able to suffer others suffering, you’ll see the amazing power of healing in that suffering. That’s why suffering for others is so beautiful, but I don’t see that. I don’t see that around me. Whenever suffering comes, we are not able to embrace any kind of suffering, whether it is my own suffering or others suffering we just reject it from our body. Healing can never happen.

Embracing Pain

My friends, when you see or when you hear other people’s suffering, don’t even try to console them or give them advice. Simply suffer with them. That is the best thing you can do for them. Be there feeling the pain they go through. Don’t try to correct them or even boost them up. Sometimes people who are suffering, they are very unreasonable. They don’t make sense. They say things that don’t make sense. Do things that don’t make sense? They’re very unreasonable. Don’t try to put reason into them. You don’t need to teach them. Just simply suffer with them. If you can try to feel every pain that person feels, that’s so hard. That’s why healing doesn’t happen. That’s the greatness of a person who is able to embrace that pain of others who say, no, no, no, no. That’s your problem. That’s your suffering.

Jesus, when Lazarus died, he wept at the last moment of his suffering. What he simply wanted was his friends, his disciples to be with him. Luke says, “His sweat turned into blood”. His suffering was so severe and what Jesus simply wanted was, “Be with me in this time of suffering” but his disciples could not do that. This is what Jesus said “I am deeply grieved even to death, remain here and stay awake with me to stay with me. Just be with me, could you not stay awake with me? Just one hour?” staying with people suffering is so difficult. They cannot do that. They cannot do that for their master, for their friends.

Suffering in our Lives Today

We see lots of suffering in this world. Just every day we are bombarded with people who are suffering. Just last week, two instances, one-person, different cities goes there and then kills three, four people and then killed himself and all that, then there was a trial going on about this drunk driver who killed the whole family, the three beautiful children and their father hearing the news on the way to the hospital, he even tried to jump out of the car to kill himself. He had that desire. So much suffering, so much pain, so much violence around us and suffering increases with human advancement and technological breakthrough. Was human suffering reduced? No. As you see people suffering around you, I hope that you may all learn to suffer with them.

Suffering as Christians

Jesus called us to do what? simple. Jesus called us to suffer with those who suffer. That's what Jesus did. I don't have any ambition, I don't have any greed whatever. Just suffer with those who suffer, that's the best thing you can do. All the disciples of Jesus Christ did many amazing things in life, they simply suffered with those who suffered and all of them were murdered. Let us not run away from suffering by finger pointing at those who suffer. By doing that, you're killing the spirit of that person. Don't finger point at them. There is a way of avoiding suffering, running away from suffering. When the woman was caught in adultery, everybody pointed at her and then she just said, "First person who has no sin, cast the first stone", they soon realized their own suffering, their own pain. Don't finger point at those who suffer. In Buddhism, they have this thing about an arrow, when the arrow hits your body, it hurts, but when the second arrow hits the same spot, you don't get hurt twice as much, but more than 10 times. Sometimes when we go through suffering, we blame ourselves and that is our second arrow. Other times, others will blame you and that needs a third area, that is not just 10 times 20 times but, hundred times more it hurts. As you are able to embrace the suffering of others, that's suffering.

Pain can be healed. Christians are those who suffer with those who suffer. That's what it looks like. That's what great Christians look like. I don't know anything else. When I say great Christians, they are the ones who suffer with those who suffer. Very last thing. I wonder whether, that is what love is, right? Suffer with those who suffer. You know another word for love is

Suffering Brings Healing

compassion, right? compassionate. You know the word compassion comes from come and passion. Come is together, passion is suffering, in other words you suffered together. You suffer with that compassion that I believe is in love. Suffer with those who suffer.

Do You Love Me?

April 3, 2016

John 21:15-19

A Difficult Question

Do you love me? That's a very difficult question to answer. In any circumstances, in any situations between spouses or parents and children or among friends when we are faced with this question. Do you love me? That is a very difficult question because that sentence involves care, attention, deep feeling, deep connectedness, loyalty, and sometimes even sacrifice. So, it is hard to say yes, I love you. So, the question do you love me is a very difficult question, and Jesus asked this question to Peter. No wonder Peter could not give him the straight answer I love you. He said, rather, 'you know that I love you.' He didn't say I love you. He said, 'you know that I love you.' It is a sheepish answer, but we understand Peter very well. I mean, as I said just now, Peter denied Jesus three times. How could he do that, for three years they got to know each other. They were like friends, good friends. You don't do that to good friends. They are not just teacher and student, but they are like friends. They didn't see each other once a week. They practically live together. Day in and day out for three years and they went through all difficulties together.

When Jesus was persecuted, when Jesus had hard times, when Jesus performed miracles, when Jesus taught an inspirational message, Peter was right there, even on the mountain, when Jesus was changed, Peter was there. He went through everything with Jesus and then Jesus at the end said you know, I'll be delivered into the hands of powerful people and then they will kill me. They'll persecute me, and then Peter, you will deny me, and Peter said, 'Lord, no, no way that will happen. Even if everybody else deserts you. I'll never desert you. I'll follow you to the grave. That won't happen. You don't do that to friend.' That's what Peter was saying, but when actual danger came. Peter denied Jesus saying, I don't know that guy. I don't know that guy, three times. That's hard thing to do, but he was so scared. So he denied Jesus three times. Now Jesus was raised from the dead and Jesus came to Peter and asked him do you love me. He couldn't say simply, I love you.

Denied

You know, I wonder. That can be quite a cruel question to ask Peter at that moment. I mean, he just denied him three times and then he approached him and then asked him, do you love me? That can be quite a cruel question. I was wondering why Jesus did that. Did Jesus ask Peter to give him a hard time or did Jesus ask Peter to truly find out his love? Because Jesus wasn't sure? Or did Jesus ask Peter to tell him indirectly how disappointed he was that he denied him three times? I don't think so. The reason Jesus asked this question was because Peter had to face that question. Do I love Jesus? Because Jesus knew that Peter was going to carry on what Jesus started and to carry on what Jesus started, he had to answer this question. He had to face this question do you love me. He had to deal with his own disappointment about himself. How could I do that to my friend and he had to deal with it. Do I really love my friend Jesus? And Jesus wanted to give him the opportunity to say, yes, I love you, but it was so hard for Peter to say that I love you. That's why he said, you know that I love you. It's very interesting when you read in a Greek, Jesus keeps asking three times, do you love me? And then he used the word agape for that love and agape is unconditional love. So, when Jesus asked, do you love me with unconditional love, agape and Peter three times he answered it, you know that I love you and to use the word phileo, meaning brotherly love, friendly love. He can't say with agape I love you, but with phileo love, I think that's a very honest answer. Do you love God? Do you love Jesus? It is really hard question to answer. Some people say, it like a formula and they say, I love you Jesus and all that, but do you really love Jesus? Do you really love God? It is hard to answer because we know our own deception. We know our own faults, shortcomings and mistakes. We know our own doubts, uncertainties and skepticism. We know our own apathy, indifference and selfishness. We know our own greed for the things that we cannot let go. We know all of these things inside of us, so when we are faced with this question, do you love Jesus? It's hard to say that yes, I love you.

God is Love

Do I love God. That is a question that is hard to answer, but something that we can never forget. Always we have to face it. We have to always carry that question with us. How do I love God? I cannot even see God. Human

love I can feel it, but with God, how can you love God, whom you cannot feel, you cannot see, you cannot touch. I mean, we reflected on it last week. How can you love God? And then I realized you can only love God because God loved us first. Loving God does not just depend on me, loving God depends a lot on God because God loved us first, then we can only love God. So, without awareness that God loves us, we can never love God. I mean love is an important thing, but we can never love God unless we realize that God loves us. When I read the scripture, I mean those are all human beings. There's all people like you and me. They are the ones who wrote the scripture. It's not really from heaven, the words came down and the scripture was created, they were ordinary people like you and me, but they somehow knew that God loves them, God loves people. How did they know? That's a wonder to me. They must have experienced something to understand that God loves the world, God loves the people.

To me, that's a wonder. That's a mystery. Abraham Heschel, who is a Jewish person, believing in Judaism. He said, "I do not ask for success in life. I asked for wonder." Oh, how beautiful. Yes. I do not ask for success. I asked for wonder. I mean, they must have experienced some kind of wonder in life to be able to say that God loves the world and God loves us. You know that very famous passage, John 3:16 "for God so loved the world" "for God so loved the world." How did he know? Somehow, he knew. So very, very clearly, he said "for God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life." God loves the world. God loves every single one of us and then more eloquently. This is described in first John. We're not quite sure who wrote first John, but let us read, "beloved, let us love one another because love is from God. Everyone who is born of God and knows God, whoever does not love, does not know God. For God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way. God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the, the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is perfected in us," What a wisdom, what an insight. How did he know so clearly that God loves us and because God first loved us, we can love God and our love for God is translated into our love for one another? That's what life is.

Love Your God and Love Your Neighbor

Any religion, it doesn't matter what religion, if they teach you to love God but not humanity, that's a corrupted religion, it's not worthwhile to take that kind of religion. Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, doesn't matter if that religion teaches you to love God but not love humanity. That's a corrupted religion. That's why Jesus was very, very clear about what life is. He said, life: love your God, love your neighbor as simple as that. The greatest commandment, the most essential thing is love your God and love your neighbor. First, somehow in the course of our lives, we have to understand, oh, God loves me. God loves me. That's a very difficult realization, but somehow, we have to get to that. God loves me. Once we understand that God loves me, then we can love God and we can love one another. Love is the most essential thing for any human being to do. That's what human beings are. That's a characteristic of human beings. That's an essential characteristic of human beings. If you don't know how to love, then you don't know how to be a human being, but in the course of our lives, we have lost the ability to love. We don't know what it means to receive love or to give love. We lost that ability, the most essential quality any human being should have. We have lost it.

When we come to the realization that God loves us. Only then can this ability to love to be restored. In other words, we need to be healed, since we we're young, we felt betrayed, rejected. This why we try so hard to be recognized by other people. How cool we are, how lovable we are, how great we are because we have experienced so many failures and so much rejection since we we're young, so we have lost the ability to simply to accept love from God and love one another. The best measure of successful life, it's not how talented you are, how intelligent you are, how high you got in your society, how much you have. Those are not the greatest measure of success. The greatest measure of success is whether you have that ability to receive love and to give love as long as we are not free from the self-centeredness, that life is a failure, but when we are free from the self-centeredness and then freely love one another, then that is success. I define success of life in that way.

When there's a touch of love, everything comes alive. A dead flower comes alive and blooms. And around us there's so much pain and hurt because of lack of love. Let us restore what should be the core of who we are. How much more success do you want, how much more money do you want?

How much more proof do you need to prove. When I'm able to receive love and in return, love one another. That's happiness. What else do you need in life? And Peter was completely restored. When Jesus came to him, that's why Jesus approached him and then he was able to even give his life away for the sake of Jesus. That's a beauty. That's a beauty. That's the power of love. Love casts out fear, even fear of death.

First Take the Log Out of Your Own Eye

September 11, 2016

Matthew 7:1-6

Context

As you read the scripture, sometimes you encounter a passage where it is really impossible to apply in our lives. And those passages is not difficult to understand or because it is hard to practice, but simply because it doesn't make sense. So, you may wonder why do I need to practice that? And today's passage is one of those. Do not judge. How can you live without any judgment? Is it even good to live without any judgment? And you may say that it's not good to live without thinking, without clear judgment about what you're doing. We always need to judge what is right and what is wrong. And I agree. I agree with you 100 percent. And also, whether we like it or not, whether we try or not, we always judge. We may not express our judgment on the outside, but deep inside of us we have our own judgment. We make an ethical judgment, political judgment, and financial judgment.

The passage we read is easy to understand but it doesn't make sense why we should live without any judgment. So, we say living with critical thinking is very important. That something that we'd like to encourage people. You should live with critical thinking. You have to know what is going on in your life and you have to know what is right and what is wrong. You cannot just blindly, aimlessly live your life. You have to live with critical thinking, but critical thinking without a clear ability to be able to judge is not possible. So, we wonder whether we can take this passage literally. So, when we read the Bible, we cannot just take one sentence out of his own context. For example, we cannot single out one sentence such as "do not judge" ignoring the whole context. We have to consider the whole context.

And today I like to examine with you the whole context of today's scripture passage. First of all, let us think about judgment. I think there's a difference between judgment and judgmental-ism. I don't think judgmental-ism is an English word, but let's just use it for our own purpose. So, I think there's a difference between judgment and judgmental-ism. Douglas Hare, one of the scholars who write on the commentary on Mark, I think he defined

judgmental-ism very creatively and very insightfully. So, let me introduce that. Judgmental-ism is a social sin. It is the habit of constantly finding fault with what others say and do. It is a disease of the spirit. The critic arrogantly assumes a superiority that entitles him or her to assess the feelings of others. I think the important word is entitlement.

Entitlement

The people who have arrogance in their hearts think that they are entitled to find fault in others. To say aloud the faults in other people. This entitlement, the attitude of entitlement. Judgment is a disease of the spirit, it is also a social disease. It is something that we need to be healed from. It's not just because of the great people have this judgmental attitude. It is some people who are suffering from something, they have this judgmental attitude towards others. So judgmental-ism and judgment are two different things. Judgmental-ism is the attitude of constantly finding fault in other people. It is the attitude of "I'm better than you." They won't say it, but deep inside it's an I'm better than you kind of attitude.

I suspect that that is the kind of attitude Paul had before he met Christ. I think he lived with a superiority complex, Paul before he met Christ. That's why he wanted to kill all the Christians and the thinking that "you are wrong and I'm right, so I have to persecute you. I have to imprison you, have to kill you." I suspect that, whether he suffered from the superiority complex before he met Christ but after he met Christ, he saw himself differently, more honestly, more in a real way. He was able to say, I'm the least of all the apostles. That requires tremendous courage to be able to admit that I'm the least of all the disciples. Something came off from his eyes and then he was able to see himself in a real way, in an honest way, to see yourself in an honest and real way. To me, that person is quite a confident person. That tells me a tremendous confidence. When somebody fabricates or colours themselves as all that, I see that. And then I see their weakness, but somehow somebody who's really weak and vulnerable, who shares about their own suffering and difficulties, I see strength in that person. You're quite confident about yourself to be able to say that. But the people who suffer from lack of confidence, they always have to brag about themselves. They always have to show that they are better than other people.

Small Mistake, Large Brush

I was reflecting on Jesus' last sentence. "First, take the log out of your own eye and then you'll see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye." I was wondering what that log is. What's that log? Whenever I read this passage, I always thought like this, you're worse than other people, who do you think you are to judge other people? You have a log in your heart and, but other people have only a speck, how is it that The person with a log tries to condemn the person with only speck. In other words, you are worse than other people so don't judge other people who are better than you. That's how I took it.

But when I read this passage, this time I thought of something else, there's something else that Jesus was trying to teach. According to what Jesus said, this log is something that blinds you so that you're not able to clearly see the speck, see the scripture, take the log out of your own eye, and then you will clearly see the speck. Then we can take the speck out of our neighbor's eye. Also, I realized that when I see other people's fault and mistakes, I don't see a speck, I see a log, I consider that a log. What I'm saying is when a person makes a mistake, we blow it up, so that we paint a person with their one mistake that they made. Instead of seeing that he or she has many other great qualities and made a small mistake, we take that small thing and we make big deal out of it. We would be like, "oh, that person always lie," "that person is always this or that." We paint that person, so we see log rather than a speck. We don't see problems of people in perspective. We tend to paint the person with that small mistake that they make. That is judgmental-ism.

Beauty within Us

People are both good and bad. There's nobody who's always good. There's nobody who's always bad. They both have good and bad character. We don't need to characterize a person with our sweeping judgment. We'll never learn to appreciate people. We will always see them with cynicism. That's sad. Living with that kind of cynicism is not a happy life. That's not what life is supposed to be. You're supposed to appreciate other people. You're supposed to love other people, but if you make a judgment about a person, How can you love that person? The person who has a log in them, well, whatever goes into them becomes ugly. When you have a log inside you, whatever goes into you, it comes out ugly. Even the good things will

come out ugly. How can you love ugly things? We're supposed to love one another and that's a good life. That's a happy life. Loving other people, appreciating other people. That's a happy and good life, but when you always look at the fault in other people, how difficult that must be every day, you have to be filled with negative emotion. Whenever you see people, so in that way, you can never have a good relationship and friendship with people. This log is many things. It can be your self-righteousness. The log can be your hurt, your baggage or your pride. It can be whatever. So, once you have this log inside you, your eyes become blind and you see people in a very negative way, cynical way. And with it, you can never love and appreciate other people.

Jesus called us to love one another. Jesus' greatest commandment was to love one another. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. And when you're not able to love other people, then you are breaking Jesus' greatest commandment. That's what Jesus wanted us to live with. But when you see negative things about people, then you can never love them and appreciate them. You always put them down and you see things negatively because inside of us, there's a lot of negative things that are going on. It is hard to see positive things in people. We need to be healed from the ugly things within us, we need to take out the log so that we may be able to see clearly.

Yesterday I had a Bible study and one of our members said, "I go to the hospital to see my father who is 90 years old. He is suffering from Alzheimer." And he said, "my father, whoever he sees, he says negative things. Every single child. They come, and he criticizes. He criticizes everyone" and it drives him crazy whenever he visits him and all he gets is a negative criticism from his father. And then he said, "I'm scared that I'll be like that when I get old." We need to be healed from this negativity within us. We need to take out the log, so that we may be able to see other people and appreciate other people. People have beautiful qualities.

Every single one of them is beautiful because you all have God's image. You're created in God's image. You are beautiful, but we can never see the beauty of people. But we have a negative attitude. You will become very lonely when you start seeing people in a negative way. You won't make friends, and one by one they will leave you until you're all alone. As you get older, that becomes worse. I know many older people who don't meet

anybody, they're just on their own. They want nobody to visit them. They don't want to visit anyone. They're just all by themselves. That's a sad life towards the end. You're supposed to have many good friends and appreciate each other's beautiful quality. Jesus, die for you. You are extremely precious. Jesus will not die for somebody whose existence is meaningless. Jesus died for you because you are very precious. And we have to understand the preciousness of each other. When the log is out of you, only then you can see the beautiful quality in other people. When you see negative things about people, don't think that you're very insightful.

Person vs Somebody

Don't think that you're so smart about seeing through people. What is more important is to see the beautiful quality of a person. So sometimes when I meet a person, I always feel that I'm a very precious person. This person doesn't even give a compliment or even say anything, but when I just standing with them, it makes me feel valued. That you're very valuable and precious person. But when I stand with somebody, somebody makes me feel like garbage. So whenever I feel that I want to run away from that person as soon as possible. We need to learn to build the skill, to be able to see beautiful things in other people.

Don't fake it when you see ugly things like, "you're so beautiful." Don't fake it. It doesn't work. You'll have to see the beautiful things. Then you can appreciate that person. It is even the same as your children, you have to see the beautiful quality. Then you'll be able to love them. Loving others is not a sentimental thing. It's not something that you've decided either. To love other people, the first thing that you have to do, the most important thing that you got to do, "is you're such a precious person." You appreciate a person. Then you can love that person. So be careful with your mouth. Be careful with your words. Don't think that you are entitled to make criticism. I mean, who are you to say? Who gave you that entitlement? Nobody gave you that entitlement. That entitlement is from you, your ego, your arrogance. Always appreciate other people, respect other people.

Christian ministry is not about putting people down and changing them. Christian ministry is serving them, stand below them and appreciate them and serve them. Jesus used that method as his ministry. That's why he died on the cross. That's why he knelt down and washed the feet of his

disciples. That's something that Jesus showed us. Our ministry is to kneel down and serve one another. That's what Christian ministry is all about. God chose Ministry to change people. God did not choose politics or corporations. God chose ministry to bring about change and the core of their ministries is kneeling down and serve. To do that, you have to learn to appreciate each other. Take out that arrogance out of your heart, out of your brain. Don't easily criticize people. Learn to appreciate one another. Your life will become much better. Let forgiveness be the living principle of your life. Whatever happens, that forgiveness is the living principle of your life. Your life will get much better and you'll become a much happier person and you'll be able to help out the other people in a better way.

Life that Matters

September 18, 2016

Matthew 25:31-46

My Existence and Others

Her life that matters. It's in my sermon topic. Does my existence matter to anyone? I think this is a very important question. We have to ask ourselves all the time, does my existence matter to anyone? Are there questions that will shape my life? These questions we have to ask ourselves continuously, for example, what shall I eat or what shall I drink? What shall I wear? Those are not important questions. Those are the questions that will shape my life. That's why Jesus said don't even question those things but, there are some crucial questions that shaped my life. One of those being, does my life matter to somebody out there? I think that will shape who we will be if our existence matters to others, we can say you're living a good life. That's what good life is.

Good life is not about good food and good enjoyment, good life is if your life matters to somebody dearly, then you are living a good life. But if people don't care whether you exist or not, if my existence doesn't matter to anyone than it is sad. Sometimes I go to a funeral and I see these grandchildren coming out and see them share about their great grandparents in tears. You know, whenever I see that I feel good. I mean their grandchildren, they probably did not spend much time with them and they are not friends, but the grandchildren missed them so much and mattered to them quite a lot explaining why they cry so much, thinking about their grandparents. Then some of them share the life lesson that they taught them throughout their lives and things like that. When I look at that, in the funeral, I realized that they lived a good life. Their life mattered to their grandchildren dearly. You know, our existence cannot be defined in itself. We cannot define ourselves within just us. Our existence can only be defined in our relationship to others. I am who I am because of the relationship that I have with other people. there's a South African saying, "I am because of who you are, because you exist I exist". My existence can only be defined in our relationship to others not in itself.

As you look at this passage, this is what differentiated the sheep from the goat. This is what Jesus just said, "For I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me". Their lives matter to those who are hungry, who are strangers, who are naked, who are sick and who are in prison. Their life mattered to them. A few days ago, on September fourth, Mother Teresa was canonized as a saint. Her life mattered to many people, not only to poor people in Calcutta, but too many young people. Her life inspired many young people and gave them New Vision. A life can be like this, not everyone is selfish, not everyone is hungry. It's not just for money and fame, there are some people who live selflessly. There are some people who sacrifice their lives for other people. There are people like that, and she set the standard for them. She gave the vision to the young people, that you can also live a good life like this. She is a saint in every sense of the word because she lived a good life and her life mattered to many people. You don't need to be rich to live a good life, I don't believe so. I don't believe in materialism in that way. You don't need to be so successful to be happy, to live eighth, so called good life. You don't need to be so smart and powerful to have a fulfilling life. That's illusion doesn't go after that. Young people don't go after that. At the end of it, you'll be so disillusioned, that's not what makes a good life. Good life is if your life matters to somebody, what we need is just simple, your desire to live a life that matters to people, that's life.

A Good Life

It's now September, we are entering the fall. Fall is a season where we think about the abundance of life. Abundance of life is not about how productive or how great you are. It's not about you. Abundant life is not about you. Abundant life is about how enriching your life is to other people, how you enriched other people. That's what abundant life is all about. Abundance life is fruitful life, fruit does not exist for itself, fruit always exists for others to enjoy. So, living a fruitful life is not just for yourself. You living a fruitful life is to live a life that enriches other people and heal other people. When you live that life, that is good life. That's my definition of good life and that is the definition of good life in the Bible. The good we do to others is humanism. Yes, that is humanism. Humanism is a good thing. Humanism is something that we have to strive for, something that we always be mindful of, but to us as Christians, that is also our spirituality. It's not just

humanism, it is our spirituality. Jesus said this, “Truly, I tell you just as you did it, to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me, so what we do to people right in need is not only humanism, but spirituality”. Good that you do to other people, is something you do to Jesus.

To Jesus humanism and spirituality are not different. They are very deeply interconnected, in Jesus’ mind. Being spiritual is being humanistic. Humanistic is being spiritual. They go together. Our service for the people who are in need is our devotion to the Lord Jesus. Loving Jesus is not expressed through our emotional response to Jesus. Raising your hands and praising God and saying, “I love you, Jesus”, that’s not you. Express your love to Jesus. I mean that’s one way, but the inferior way. Superior way is through having heart for those who are suffering around us. When we have heart for those around us, that is having a heart for God. That was a central teaching of Jesus Christ, wasn’t it? Jesus said, “Love your God and love your neighbour”, they’re connected. Jesus said, humanism and spirituality are connected with each other. First of all, who brought those two together and then made the greatest commandment? Love your God and love your neighbour. He’s the one who connected those two.

Having a Heart of Others

A reporter once asked Mother Teresa, “Why do you do what you do?” What you do is like throwing eggs against the rock, you won’t change the problem of hunger in the world by doing what you do and why do you do what you do? and Mother Teresa simply answered like this, “You know? when I look at the eyes of the hungry children. I see little Jesus. That’s why I do that, to Mother Teresa humanism and spirituality we’re not separate. when she saw hungry children, she saw Jesus right there. When we see people, who are suffering around us. We should be able to see Jesus, little Jesus. We should see in each other little Jesus in each other’s’ eyes. Well, why don’t you look around and see the people around you.

Do you see Jesus, or do you see devil? Jesus is not way up there. Jesus is right here amongst us, in anyone eyes who’s suffering. Jesus is right there because they need Jesus. Mother Teresa might not have had the gigantic economic plan to relieve the hunger problem of the world, but there’s one thing that she taught us and that is very important lesson “Have heart for those, for suffering”, I think that is the greatest lesson. That is where

everything begins. Have heart for those who are suffering. If you see the neighbouring country suffering, have heart for those. If your neighbour is suffering have heart for those, that's how everything begins. We are living in a heartless world. We don't care about anybody around us who suffers. We need to restore their heart. That is what healing is all about. We need to restore their heart for those who are suffering around us. You don't need to go to prison. You don't need to go out the street. Just look around you. There are people who need your attention and have heart for those. That's what humanity and spirituality is all about.

Helpless Love

October 16, 2016

Hosea 11:1-2

Helpless Love

What I'm going to share is the essence of Christian belief and a core of what we have on the foundation of Christian belief, and you will realize that that is quite different from the teachings of the world if you're not careful, we just bring the teachings of the world into the church and just change the labels and start thinking that that is a message, Christian message. But that is not Christian message. So, I like to share with you so it can be counter cultural message for you. In Hosea and other prophetic books, we see a very angry guy. It is a kind of scary to think of the all mighty, all powerful God being angry because you will know what this powerful all powerful almighty God may do to you. So, a lot of people live with the scary image of God. Whenever people think about God, they think of the scary image. But this time when I read Hosea, I saw another aspect of God. I saw God who was emotionally very vulnerable. Yes. Every one of let us hear the word. Hosea one to two "When Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me. They kept sacrificing to the gods and offering incense to idols", but it has nothing to do with age. I was like that when I was 20. I forgot. Anyway, let's go back. So, this time, this time when I read Hosea, yes, I saw very angry

God is Vulnerable for his Children

God, but I saw another aspect and that aspect is I saw God was emotionally vulnerable. That was quite the revelation to me. I never thought of God that way. I never thought of God being vulnerable emotionally. I never thought of God who, cannot control himself. I always thought that God is always in good control, never gets affected by human beings, never gets angry. He's kind of aloof, distant. He's not affected by human beings, but I realized that God was affected so much by human beings that he got angry with them. I mean who are we to make God that affected? And I saw that image of God this time. He wasn't like parents who say anything if they're getting angry with their children in a lot of times they don't mean what they say, but we say things anyway, I'll kick you out. I will never feed

you. I know all kinds of things that we say to our kids, but we will never kick them out. We'll never not feed them, you know, so like almost like I saw God's tension in that passage. That was really refreshing the other day Kee shared with us, you know, whenever she goes into the van and the kids already have earphones and don't listen when she talks. "So, how are you?" They pretend that they're not listening. So, keep this time when she entered the van, she put earphone first and then show us. The kids are very confused. "Well, what is going on here?" And then "mom, I had a math test today."

A Helpless Saviour

Oh, what is he saying? You know, parents are like that. We threatened them, you know, we shout at them and then. But will never not love them, right? Love our children that is helpless image of God, and I saw a helpless God rather than the Almighty God in the books of prophets. God saw Israel running away from him, and yet God cannot do anything to stop them. Listen to what God said in verse two, the more I called them, the more they went from me. They were running away from God, the almighty God who could just destroy them, right? Right there, but he couldn't do anything. Helpless God I saw, and I realized that that image of God is very different from the image of God in the world. When we create idles. When we create images, when we create God, we always create a powerful God. God who can do anything, we will never create a helpless God, but book of Prophets, they present the helpless God. Many times, the God we've created is a personification of the desire, our desire to be powerful. And we translate that into God who has absolute power? And we call that God, but the God that is shown in the book of profits is very helpless God. You know, when it comes to New Testament, Jesus captured that helpless God image very clearly in the story of the prodigal son, in the story of a prodigal son, it is not about the prodigal son. That story is about God. This prodigal son, his son gives me my inheritance. Father did not die yet, and this rude, arrogant son comes to him, give me my critic tense and the father gifts that inheritance and his son runs away. It goes away from home and the father cannot stop it. He helpless. Wait and wait and wait until he comes back.

Love is forgiveness

You don't see all mighty God who controls his children. We see a helpless God who is waiting for the son to return. I think Jesus captured that image

very well. I experienced that in my own life. What transformed me more was my mother rather than my father. My father was a strong man. He was going very well, but my mother was never an aggressive woman. She was always soft, gentle, soft spoken. She never told me what to do. She was simply there and when I was hurt, she was just there because she didn't know what to do. I could see her helplessness. She wanted to do something for me, but she could not do anything. What could she do? I was hurting. I was going through pain, but she was just there hurting with me. That helplessness, but behind that helplessness I found tremendous power of love working and that power transforming me, that power changed me. I thought in that helplessness there's no power, period, but in that helplessness, there was tremendous power of God's grace working. Isn't that what the cross is all about? Isn't that what we believe about the cross?

Jesus died on the cross. Helplessly. People were yelling at him. If you were a truly the son of God and has that much power to save us, save yourself! Do something about it. Show your power, then we will believe you as a savior, as Messiah. Jesus didn't do anything. He just as helplessly slowly died on the cross. He was just hung there helplessly. Behind the helplessness, there was a power of God's grace flowing out of him, and he moved us, and transformed us even on the cross, the only thing that was in Jesus consciousness or mind was, forgive them. How could he do that? And the last moment of his death, all he could think about was people. Forgiveness of people. In that helplessness there is powerful love. The power of love working. I mean that's why St Paul said this message for the message about the cross is foolishness because he already helped this. Just there. It is foolishness to those who are perishing to those who don't understand, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. He dares boldly proclaims the cross is the power. Think about that. Whether that is the message that you learn, or you get from the world, we'd never want to be helpless. You want to be powerful even in serving God. We want to be powerful with that power. We serve other people. Being in the position of helping others is good, but he sees you and it can be tempting while helping others. You feel powerful. You have all the money and help other people and you feel powerful sometimes having lost some money and help the poor and the need is good, and I do believe there is good and noble.

Using Power for the Powerless

Having power and using the power and help the powerless is admirable. Having the power and using the power and help the powerless, it's admirable, but my friends, the power Jesus showed us is different. It is the power of the cross. It is a power of helpless love, and then I realized this wisdom, this truth. I realized that scary God will never change people. Only love of God change people. In front of scary God, you pretend that you changed. You want to think. You want to believe that you want to change, you change before the scary God, but only the love of God can truly change us and transform us. As parents, what I learned was helplessness, and babies cry all night just helplessly. "Wait, please baby, why do you cry so much? What's wrong?" Well, you cannot do anything about it. When they become teenagers and go through their own rebellious time in a difficult time we just sit there. My goodness- Why don't you think? Don't you have a brain to think? I mean, well, my kids were good about that. I spoke a message all other people, but I cannot speak a message to my own kids! Then I feel so helpless and powerless, and well, that's what you're going to learn powerlessness and helplessness. No, but behind that helplessness and powerlessness, there is true power of your love. As minister. I've done ministry for 20, 30 years and what I learned is helplessness.

Even today, even today, but day by day, I feel helplessness. No, I try to give the best messages as I can. I try to help out people as much as I can. I want people to really enjoy the community. As you know, I try my best, but one day people just leave and have no reason to leave. You know, that hurts as a minister. Whereas if there's a good reason, yeah, but for them, maybe it's a casual decision. "Oh, I decided to go to another church, whatever", or "I decided not to not go to church at all", but that careless decision for the casual decision for me, I stay up all night hearing that. All I learned was helplessness, but behind that helplessness, I do believe that God's grace is working. This is what St Paul says, "my grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness, so our boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities for the sake of Christ, for whenever I'm weak, then I am sure." What a powerful truth. Whenever I'm weak, I am sure.

I want this church to reflect on this power, a helpless love more deeply, and through your helplessly love, many people will be transformed. They will

experience God's grace. Christian ministry is not about path. People you change. That's not Christian ministry. Christian ministries simply loving them, serving that sometimes powerlessly and helplessly, but God's grace will work within it. Very different message from the world. I do believe this world says, be powerful, be strong, have influence, and with that change people, I think Christianity started getting corrupted from the moment it was adopted as Roman religion, when Christianity is connected with a power that is the way to be corrupted, I hope that we, this church, turns around that message and then be the counter, proclaim the counter message counterculture message be different, right?

We are All One

November 13, 2016

John 17:22-23

Jesus' Hope

This Sunday, I'd like to reflect on oneness. I'm going to reflect on three scripture passages from three different places, and I'd like to understand, uh, what it means to be a one in Christ and how that can be different from the oneness in the world. The first passage that I'm going to reflect on is from John, Mina read it beautifully and we are going to reflect on that. If you see the background of that passage, that was like Jesus' deathbed, a prayer just before he died. That was Jesus' last prayer for the world. You can see a Jesus' desire. After 33 years of ministry, after life on earth, and that was the prayer that he was wanting to leave behind for the people to hear and listen and take. Take it seriously.

That is the context of that prayer. And when you look at it, verse 20, it says, "I ask not only on behalf of this," I asked – that means Jesus prayed. Then from verse 21 to 23, when you read it carefully every verse, he says this phrase, "They may all be one." Every verse, 21, 22, to 23, "As we are one, I pray that they also may be one." And in the last verse, Jesus added 'completely' to emphasize the oneness, "So that they may completely be one." That was what Jesus wanted for the world. He wanted to see the unity. How appropriate that prayer is for all of us. We Christians should take that prayer very seriously, and we should also do that prayer. As you look at the world, it is fragmented, divided, you name it. For all reasons, we are living in a world that is very fragmented.

A Revolutionary Vision

After Jesus prayed that, a few years later, there was a person who took on the torch of Jesus Christ and carried on that vision of Jesus Christ in his life. And his name is Saint Paul. Saint Paul also prayed and worked for the unity, the oneness of humanity. And he talked about oneness a little bit more in detail than what Jesus prayed for. This is what he said, "There is no longer Jew or a Greek. There is no longer slave or free. There is no longer male and the female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." That is

the crux of Paul's theology. That is the core of Paul that tried to establish in this world. Jews and Greeks? They did not even eat together. Slaves could never be one with the free. Women were not considered as an equal partner. During Paul's time, women will like properties. As a matter of fact, Jewish people prayed this prayer every morning at that time, and that prayer goes like this: "Thank you God for not making me a gentile, not making me a slave and not making me a woman." That was what Jewish people prayed every morning. So, some scholars said that Paul was seeing there was neither male nor female in the context of that prayer. That prayer was taken for granted at that time. Paul saw the vision that in Christ, they may all become one. He saw the vision of equal partnership, men and women who are equal partners.

In the last scripture passage I'd like to look at is from the Old Testament, Genesis. That was also the vision of writer of Genesis. The Genesis writer thought that this vision was in God's heart when he created this world. When Eve was created, Adam finally cried out, "This at last is born of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Complete oneness Adam experienced. There is no division. There is no hierarchy. "Your bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh." Right from the beginning of creation, God had this vision. That was the order of creation. That's what God wanted right from the first place, that all become one. So, being one is mandated by the Bible. Being one is a beautiful vision.

But it is a radical vision. It is a dangerous vision. Many people got killed because of that vision. Jesus was killed, St Paul was killed, and in modern days, so many people got killed because they preached the message of oneness. Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed. It's a dangerous vision. Especially in the world, there are people who are mostly interested in dominating, conquering, and controlling. That vision is a very dangerous vision. To them, being one is making others under their power, whether it's a religious power, political power, financial power or gender power, whatever that is, to them, being one is making others under their power and their control. The only way they know about achieving oneness is by conquering the weaker ones.

St. Paul & His Concept

Jesus' idea of oneness was very, very different. Jesus emptied himself to be one with us. Jesus was completely stripped of his power on the cross to make all of us one with God and one with each other. Paul's idea of oneness was a challenge to the Roman and Jewish system where the free control, the slave Jews and gentiles did not associate with each other, and men dominated women. So, Paul's message of oneness was a challenge to that establishment of that system. American people said loud and clear through this election, we don't want establishment anymore. We are sick and tired of establishment having all the power.

I think Bernie Sanders saw it right when he said after the election result that Donald Trump tapped into the anger of a declining middle class that is sick and tired of establishment, economics, establishment politics, and establishment media. When the top 10th of one percent owns almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent, and when 99 percent of all new income goes to the top one percent, it is impossible to be one. Establishment rules dictates and dominates, and so American people did not like that. But there is an evil that we need to name though. Donald Trump. Any speech he used had anti-establishment sentiments, but his speeches also echoed the racist and sexist sentiment in America. If a woman has to submit to a man to be one, then that is not true oneness. To be one, we need to understand the power we have, and we should share that power with others.

St. Paul said, "The gentiles do not have to follow the way of the Jewish life to be one with them." So, St. Paul said, "Don't be circumcised. You don't need to keep the dietary rule. You can never be one by keeping the law. Only in Christ you can be one." Radical message. We are all equal partners in Christ. Today is Women's Sunday. The reason we have Women's Sunday is because women's leadership has not been very well recognized. Even though we are equal partners, often women's ministry was limited to a certain area. We have to recognize the gifts of the people regardless of the gender in order to serve. We have to recognize the faith of a person rather than the gender of a person in order to recognize them as leaders of the church. There is no hierarchy between men and women. When Adam said, "Alas you are born on my bones and flesh of my flesh," there no hierarchy, only complete oneness. We believe that we are one in Christ.

Paul received tremendous persecution, as we studied in Galatians. He received tremendous persecution from the establishment, from the Roman system and from the Jewish system. From both sides, he received tremendous persecution and ultimately killed because he saw a wonderful vision in Christ. In Christ, everyone is equal. Everyone is worthy and precious. How could you dare or ever say 2000 years ago, that in Christ, there is no room for the power to control, conquer, and dominate. In Christ, we submit to each other in love and respect. That is the gospel. That is the gospel.

Jesus prayed for that. If we believe that, then we have to work on that instead of following the pattern of the world, where the powerful subjugates the weak. That is not the message that we believe in. Paul's message was very much an anti-establishment message, but his message was also a radical message overcoming the racial, sexual, and class boundaries. When only recently the slavery was abolished, but Paul said there is no longer slaves or the free. When only 50 years ago – this year is the 50th anniversary of women's ordination – when only 50 years ago, the Presbyterian church in Canada passed the woman ordination, but Paul said there is no longer male and female. Where did he get that idea? Where did he get that idea of equality? Two thousand years ago? I believe there's a spirit. I believe this God who gave that idea.

Reflection

On Thursday, I met two relatively young people and we stayed until 10:30/11, I'm not sure, talking about this world and about life, about faith, about being a Christian. They needed to let out and sought and understand this world after the shocking result of the US election. One person is in finance. So, I asked him, "How are you doing? How's your field in finance doing?" And he said, "Reverend, I'm scared. I'm scared not for my job. I'm not scared for the finances. I'm scared for humanity." And we were talking about being a Christian. Being a Christian is not about having power, but about sharing the power.

You can say that Jesus had the most powerful power. He had the divine power, and yet he gave all that up and died on the cross. Powerlessly. What is the message? Power can never make us one. Power can never make the humanity one. Only when we start sharing the power we have

We are All One

with the powerless in love, we can be one. Yes, there is a life of power, but there is also a life of love. And the life of love is a life Jesus preached, Paul preached. I hope that we hear the message loud and clear – what we need to do with our lives.

Being a Gift to Each Other

December 25, 2016

Isaiah 9:6

Matthew 2:1-12

What Is the Christmas Season About?

You know, when the Christmas season comes, you don't want to go to a shopping center because it's way too busy. But this year somehow Christmas came so suddenly, I didn't even realize it was Christmas. So, the other day I went to Indigo without realizing it was Christmas time and I went in there, oh my goodness, so many people. And there was a lineup that's all around the big, huge store, there was a lineup all around the wall. I just went to get a small book without realizing it was Christmas time. I didn't come for Christmas gifts, I just came for the book. There were so many people, but there were so many people also working there so it didn't take too much time.

Gifts. That's what we do during Christmas season. 20 percent of total sales are done during Christmas time. People are busy buying gifts even though it is true there that Christmas has been overly commercialized, but I still believe that a gift is what summarizes what Christmas is all about. Christmas is about gifts. Christmas is to celebrate God's gift of Jesus to the world.

In the Isaiah passage we read today, he said, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." A son is given as a gift. The wise man story also picked up the theme of a gift. They saw the birth of Jesus as the gift to the world. So, they came with their gifts in response to the gift of God for the world. God gave us the most gracious and precious gift. You can say that God gave God's self for the world. There is nothing more precious than giving yourself. That is probably the most precious gift that you can give, or you can receive. Yourself. And God gave God's self to us and for the world. God was the one who initiated the gift giving.

God's Gift

In Jacob Story's, Jacob had a problem with his brother Esau because he stole something from him and he had to run away from home. He was a mama's boy, he stayed home all other times. But this time he had to be all by himself when running away. So, he was very lonely. He was never alone. He was lonely at night all by himself, he was kind of sad and lonely and all that. And that's when God appeared to him, and this is what God says to Jacob, "I am with you. I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. I will not leave you. I am with you." God gave Jacob the gift of God's presence.

"I am with you and I will be with you." God presence, we call it what? Emmanuel, we call it Emmanuel. When Jesus Christ came, Matthew described it in this way; "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall name him Emmanuel," because that means God is with us. And also, when Jesus left us when he left of world, the last word that he said in Matthew, the last word Jesus said to us was this, "And remember I am with you always to the end of the age." He came as God being with us and he left us with God being with us. He came as Emmanuel and he left as Emmanuel. God gave himself to us as a gift. The gift of Emmanuel is the most precious gift.

By giving us his self, God's self, God taught us how we are to live our life. As God was a gift to us, God wants us to be a gift to each other. Being a gift to each other is the most precious gift that you can give to each other. Let us recognize that people around you are gifts from God for you. They're not there to pull you down. They're not there to attack you and destroy you. The people around you are there as gifts from God, but sometimes we forget. The people around me are gifts. Sometimes we think that they are enemies, they are threats. We don't look at them as God's gift to us. Today is a wonderful Christmas, so we say, 'Merry Christmas', and maybe we can say "Thank you for being gift." Why don't you go around and look around, say thank you for being a gift?

You Are All Gifts

All of you are gifts, that's our Merry Christmas. You are my gift, you are not my threat. You are my gift! But Herod didn't think that way. Herod didn't see the birth of Jesus as a gift to the world. Herod saw the gift, the birth of

Jesus as a threat. Even though Jesus' kingship was very, very different from what Herod thought, Herod did not understand Jesus' kingship. So, he thought that this king may take away my kingship, so he looked at Jesus, the birth of Jesus as the threat, not as a gift. When you see another person as a threat, then what comes next? Fear. Fear comes. "Oh, that person might harm me, destroy me." The fear comes. When fear came to Herod, he killed innocent children. So many people, so many innocent children, he killed. Violence comes as a result of fear.

That's what we do. When we start looking at each other as a threat, then fear comes. When fear comes, we become violent. That's what we see in the world. Violence all around us because we don't look at each other as a gift, we look at each other as a threat. We have to ask ourselves, how do we see each other? How do we see other people, as a gift or as a threat? Do you see people who are different from you, just because of the fact that they are different from you, are they enemies? Sometimes we look at different people as enemies. People who are so different from us, racially or whatever reason, when they're different, we see them as a threat or enemy, not as a gift. Just because they are different, they're enemies.

This world makes it so hard and even seemingly impossible to each see each other gifts. I'm so sad that this world has become that way. It is so hard to see each other as gifts, but it is very understandable. It is very understandable. I understand that very well. It is very understandable why people are so scared of each other. I mean, when a stranger just drives a trailer truck into the market killing 12 people like in Germany just the other day, how can you see the stranger as a gift?! The moment we experience that, the moment we hear that, we see a stranger as a threat, not as a gift. It is very understandable, so we have no choice but to build higher walls against each other because we are scared. We build strong walls against each other because we are scared. It is understandable, but is it the best way to live? It may protect us, but does that give us a fulfilling life? Is that the kind of humanity we want to nurture, establish and build? What kind of humanity do we want to build, do we want to uphold? That's not the way we human beings are supposed to live. Seeing each other as a threat, seeing each other as danger, seeing each other as enemies. That's not the way you're born to live. That's not God's will. God gave us Jesus as the gift so that we may also be the gift to each other, by having the real broken relationships healed and restored. Jesus came to open our eyes so that

through our eyes we may see other people in a new way. At least that was how Paul saw the birth of Jesus. This is what Paul said, “For He is our peace, Jesus Christ. For he is our peace, in his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall.” That is the hostility between us. Jesus came to break down the wall, and now we are building the wall against each other.

This Christmas...

This Christmas will be meaningful if we experience our broken relationships being healed. Maybe there are some people that you need to forgive, or maybe you need to let go of bad feelings towards somebody, and he or she may not even recognize that you have a bad feeling. If you have a grudge against somebody, maybe during this Christmas season you can let go and be free from that grudge, bad feeling and animosity. That was what Jesus came to do. Jesus even said, “Love your enemy.”

We have to learn to see each other as a gift from God. It is hard, but it’s the most beautiful thing we can do. And if you can do it, they will have the most beautiful life we were meant to live. I want to tell you lastly, the very, very important message to you. Maybe somebody who gives you a difficult time, who gives you a hard time – maybe that person is God’s gift to you. Not only the people who do well, who do good things, people who give you hard times. Maybe they are God’s gift for you. Maybe your spouse is God’s gift to you, giving you a hard time. That’s a message.

What makes us happy at Christmas? It’s a gift, but the most beautiful gift, I believe, is people. People around you, that’s the most beautiful gift. Cherish them. When you start seeing other people as your gift, you will become very, very happy. I guarantee. When your eyes change, and you start seeing other people, “You are my gift!” Then you’ll be very happy.

After KSM service, some people were going out, and said “you are my gifts,” they told me. Your family, your friends, your coworkers, even of noxious people around you. They’re all gifts from God.

Go and Do Likewise

January 29, 2017

Luke 10:25-37

The Question

Good Samaritan. It is a good story, it is known as a very good story and it is a very important message for humanity. It's not just for Christians, for any human being, they should live with this message in mind. So they love this story and they like this story and I like it this story too. But somehow it is an important message and yet the meaning of this story is kind of not well understood. They got the wrong message, he's like, "Be nice to the strangers, be nice to people who're in trouble or difficulty or in need." But I don't think that is the main message of today's story. So that's what I'm going to expound with you, explore together, the true meaning of this story.

The story started with a question from a lawyer and he asked this question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" A very important question. How can I live eternally? How, how can I have eternal life? The very important question is about the eternal life. And hearing that question, somehow though, Jesus sensed that the lawyer already had the answer. You know, there's some questions you ask because you don't know, and you want to find out, but there are some questions that you know, you have an agenda. You don't really ask that question, but you want to say something else.

The Answer

But Jesus already knew, "Oh, this guy has an agenda, some kind of agenda." So, he already knows the answer, but he's asking me this question. So, Jesus is a very smart person, hearing one thing and he understands hundreds or thousands of much bigger things. He can see through people. So, when he heard that question, he knew that he already knew the answer. So instead of answering him, he responded with another question. "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" At the time, the law was the Old Testament, and Jesus was right – this guy already knew the answer. He gladly and immediately answered. "You shall love the

Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” That is a sharp answer, a good answer... it summarizes the whole Old Testament. With just one sentence, he could summarize the whole Old Testament. The lawyer was very sharp, a very smart guy.

Or, he heard this message already before. Because when you read Mark, it was Jesus who gave this answer. It was Jesus who taught this message. So probably in another setting, this lawyer might have heard what Jesus taught. Now he’s answering what Jesus answered maybe, I don’t know. Anyway, it was a very good answer. Jesus was very pleased with his answer. Jesus said, “You have given the right answer. Do this and you will live in others. Do this, you will have eternal life.” But the lawyer’s real question was not there. The lawyer’s real question was in the second question. That’s what he wanted to get at. “Who is my neighbor?” Who is my neighbor? It’s not that he didn’t know the answer this time too. He already knew the answer. Sensing that he already knew the answer, Jesus now finally gave his answer with a story. That’s how the Good Samaritan story came about. He wanted to answer this lawyer’s question, “Who is my neighbor?”

The Neighbour

From the beginning, the lawyer came to Jesus with a hostile attitude. When you look at the beginning of the story it says, “Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.” Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. This test is to tempt, it’s not to test anything else but to trap him, to put him in difficulty or difficult situation. The lawyer was probably upset with Jesus. The way Jesus represented, Jesus’ message, Jesus’ actions, Jesus’ life, all these things. He wasn’t really pleased with what Jesus was doing. So, he came to challenge Jesus. He came to confront Jesus, he came to prove Jesus wrong. So, he asked this question for Jesus to publicly declare that “Who really is my neighbour?” Who are our friends? In the lawyer’s mind, it was very clear. He knew who was his neighbour, who was his friend. His neighbours are fellow Jews who abide by the law. Fellow citizens who are elite, who are doing well. They are the neighbours to this lawyer. Not sinners, not tax collectors, not prostitutes, not the poor, not the sick, not Syrians, not refugees, not Mexicans. The lawyer seemed offended by Jesus’ attitude and teachings.

So, Jesus gave this story, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. From Jerusalem to Jericho was 18 miles.” I was there too, but it’s a very dangerous and rough road. So, at that time it was known as the way of blood because so many people were robbed and killed on the way. The man fell into the hands of robbers who stripped him, beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. People who are listening to Jesus, they nodded, “Yeah, yeah. That road is very, very dangerous. When you go there on your own, that can happen. Yeah, yeah, you’re right.” So, they all identified with what Jesus was saying.

The Twist

But the story made a quick turn right there, and the story stabbed into the minds of people who were listening like a double-edged sword. A priest and Levi passed by, but they didn’t do anything. Your neighbour, your friends, they pass by, but they didn’t do anything. Jesus did not give a reason why they just passed. Probably for their own safety. Or “That guy, I don’t know whether he’s dead or not, but he’s been attacked. Maybe there’s still robbers around.” Or, who knows? Or “This guy may just be pretending that he was attacked. He’s just pretending he’s an innocent victim, maybe he’s a robber. If I go there, he might attack me.”

They wanted to put a distance when on the other side. They were thinking about their own safety. Strikingly, a Samaritan came to help this man who was badly hurt. People who were listening might have shouted in their minds, “Samaritan? Of all the people, Samaritan? No, please. A Samaritan cannot do this. Samaritans cannot do any good” At that time, the Jews and Samaritans did not get along very well. There’s a history behind it, but I don’t have time and you don’t have patience to listen to all the history, so I’ll just skip it. But they were just bad to each other. That’s why people in the southern part and some areas and Galilee, they had to go through the same area. They didn’t want to go through the land of Samaritans. They went around, took detours. But it was stranger, Jesus went through Samaritan areas and met a Samaritan woman when you look at John 4. But they didn’t really along with each other.

But it was a Samaritan who helped the person in trouble. Then, a very, very important question came. That question penetrated into the soul of the people. “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man

who fell into the hands of the robbers?” Which of these three? That lawyer had to answer Jesus’ question this time. He came with a question, but now he had to answer Jesus’ question. He said, “The one who showed mercy.” Look at this answer. Look at this answer. The one who showed mercy... he couldn’t say Samaritans. He wouldn’t say Samaritans. He wouldn’t name it. “The one who showed mercy.” Jesus thought that was good enough. So, he said, “Go and do likewise.” Go and do likewise.

Go and Do Likewise...

Now you know who your neighbour is. Go and do likewise. Who is our neighbour? Mexico will not think the USA is their neighbour just because they are neighbouring countries. The people who are captured in the airport, they would think that the USA is their neighbor. There’s some Harvard students, Stanford students, they wanted to go away for a study trip and on the way back, they got trapped. People who work at Google, they went away for business. On the way back, they are trapped. I don’t know what the world can we live in. The whole world is moving toward protectionism. Me first, me first. Us against them.

We become heartless and loveless. Jesus was right when he said, “At the end of the age, people will become loveless.” To show mercy is not easy. Sometimes there is danger involved. The Samaritan risked the danger to show mercy, my friends. Always, showing mercy takes priority. Showing mercy takes priority. That’s the teaching of Jesus, the teaching of Christianity. That’s why Jesus said, “Go and do likewise.” My friends, don’t let your consciousness, don’t let your conscience, don’t let your mind be tainted by the teachings of the world. Listen to the teaching of Jesus Christ. That’s who we are. The one who showed mercy to anyone. That’s our neighbour.

Don't Be Rude, Be Kind

February 5, 2017

Matthew 5:38-42

Ephesians 4:31-32

A Simple Principle

Look at those two sentences. If I may summarize in one sentence. That is, don't be rude. Be kind. So that's it. That's my sermon. I can go down. Well, what more can I say? Don't be rude, be kind. That's what summarizes this particular passage. I think it's a very simple principle, but very important and a principle for a good life. Don't be rude. Be Kind.

Always keep that in mind every time you interact with people, as you live your life. Always remember, don't be rude, be kind. It's almost like saying, don't worry, be happy, same as don't be rude, be kind. I mean, don't worry, be happy is a very nice catchphrase, but don't be rude, be kind. Is as good a catchphrase as don't worry. That is something that you should always keep in mind in your daily life. Be mindful of that. Be conscious of that. If you cannot do it, work on it. If you keep doing it, you'll get better at it. Don't be rude, be kind. The Dalai Lama said, "Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." This is a very profound message. Be kind whenever possible, but it is always possible. We always have to find an opportunity to be kind. That's simply a good thing to do as a human being, and when the opportunity comes, do it. Be kind to others.

This is what Jesus taught us. If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also, and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give them your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone. One who begs from you and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

Resistance from Within

While writing my sermon, when I wrote this part about Jesus, this came to me. First, I chose only the Ephesians passage and then I put the Matthew passage too. That passage came to my mind as I was writing my sermon

and as soon as I put it down on my paper, I wanted to scratch it out. I really wanted to scratch it out because there's deep resistance that was coming from within me. I said, no way. Who can do that? That is a stupid thing to do. People say, if anyone strikes me on the right cheek, I will strike right back. I'm not stupid. I'm not a doormat. If anyone takes my coat by suing me, I'll make sure to take it back and more. If anyone forces me to go one mile, never mind the one mile. If anyone forces me to do anything, I won't do it simply because it was forced upon me.

No one can force me to do anything. Give to everyone who begs from me, then I'll be broke. This is ridiculous. It's stupid. It's crazy. You can easily put aside this kind of teaching by saying that it is too idealistic. We can't survive with this kind of teaching especially in this day and age. This is a crazy thought, but I didn't scratch it out. It still bothered me because it was the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was not a teaching of a crazy lunatic or self-centered fanatic. It was our Lord Jesus Christ who gave us this teaching. So instead of putting aside, I reflected on it, read it again and again and again. The more I read it, I felt something beautiful about this teaching. I don't know how much I can practice this in my life, but there is a beauty to it. I felt the deep love of Jesus for others.

Love Your Enemies

Right after this teaching, as you read further along, Jesus said, love your enemies. Love your enemies? Love and enemies don't go together. It's not a sentence that makes sense. Love your enemy? Love your neighbor makes sense, but love your enemies? It doesn't make sense. These are not two words that go together, love and enemies.

Then I realized the love Jesus is talking about is very different from the love that I know, or most people know. The love Jesus is talking about is radically different. Love your enemies. I want you to reflect on that. Love your enemies. Only when we understand this kind of love from Jesus, then what the Dalai Lama said is possible. Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible. Only when that kind of love is there, then what the Dalai Lama said can work.

The Opposite Extreme

What Jesus taught about turning the other cheek is one extreme. Yes, it is an extreme message, but the world is going the other extreme. People are running towards the other extreme. The world says, before they strike me on my right cheek, I will strike them first. Preemptive attack. Someone said, not only do we not love our enemies, we don't even love our neighbors.

Choose to be Kind

Instead of ignoring the teaching of Jesus Christ as idealistic and unrealistic, we need to take that message deep in our heart. Kindness comes from the kind of love Jesus taught us. We can be rude in many situations. But my friends, choose to be kind. Whatever situation you may be in, choose to be kind. Choose your words to be kind. Choose your facial expressions to be kind. Choose for your life to be kind. If possible, choose to be kind and remember, it is always possible. If you can say first "Hello, hi", don't wait for other people to do so.

Be kind to each other. Be kind to humanity. Be kind to the earth. That's what our garbage initiative is all about. Be kind. One word, one smile, one action that comes from kindness has a magical power to have impact on people. When you step out the door every day in the morning, say to yourself, Lord, give me an opportunity for me to show kindness. Every morning when you step out the door, tell yourself, Lord, give me the opportunity for me to show my kindness. You won't just find one opportunity, but you'll be able to find many opportunities.

Opportunities to be Kind

Last Friday I was finishing up my sermon on kindness and I prayed a in the middle of it, "Lord let me live my life being kind", and then as soon as I finished, "ding dong". At the church, there's a doorbell and I don't usually go out. The secretary usually goes up and down, so I waited a bit, another "ding dong" came, and so I went out and then this one woman who was preparing lunch for KSM brought all these groceries and meat, so God gave me the opportunity to be kind. Even though I have a bad back, I carried heavy meat, and it was good. It was so strange that right there, God sent me this woman for me to be able to show kindness. As we live looking for the opportunity to be kind, you become happier, and you make

everyone happier. When you're rude, you become unhappy, and you make many people miserable.

Once I got into this elevator, and as soon as I walked in, there was a woman and she said, nice hair. What? Nice hair? My hair is my worst feature in my mind. Nobody tells me about my hair! I don't usually do my hair, I just look briefly, but on that day, hearing "it's not bad" as soon as I walked into the elevator, she made my day. I still talk about it. I will never forget that.

Being kind has a powerful impact on people. Happiness is very simple. Be kind. You don't need to be a philosopher. You don't need to be a doctor. You don't need to be a lawyer to be kind. You don't need to be a millionaire to be kind. And also, one great thing about being kind is that you can be kind to anyone, even strangers. You can be kind. Be a kind person, simple as that.

As you try to be kind, you realize how proud you are, how problematic you are. You realize that you cannot even simply be kind to people. Don't gossip. I don't know why people gossip about people they don't know very well. Say Nice things about people. Don't talk behind people's backs. That's not a nice thing to do. Say good things, uplifting things about people. Being kind involves everything. Humility, a big heart, love, compassion, everything. It is a wonderful principal. Don't be rude. Be kind.

Together We Stand

February 12, 2017

1 Corinthians 3:1-7

Paul and Apollo

Gospel stories always have implications not only for individuals personally, but for the church, for the society, for humanity. It has implications, so when we hear other gospel stories, we have to always remember that it has a social significance. At the same time, it has a personal significance and spiritual significance. As you see into the scripture, the Corinthian church was divided. There were people who followed Paul and there were people who followed Apollos. Paul and Apollos were leaders in the Clinton community. Paul was the one who founded the Corinthian community, and Apollos came later, but he was very eloquent, and he had charismatic influence on people.

Paul and Apollos never had problem with each other, they were not divided at all, but people were divided. People used Paul and Apollos for their own personal agenda and take control, control of the community. When they were fervent, they were religious. They thought that they were good believers, but in Paul's eyes, they were like infants. They're not mature Christians. I mean there are some people who really are religious and all that, but in Paul's eyes they look like infants. So, Paul saw this as very immature attitude and he said this, "I fed you with milk, not solid food for you because you're not ready for solid food. Even now, you're still not ready for you're still of the flesh for as long as there's jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving according to human inclination?". Divisive attitude is spiritually immature attitude. A spiritually mature person always tries to build and bring unity even though it may not be the sole purpose, they try their best to bring unity wherever they go.

Becoming One

A church is a place where all kinds of people gather together. Politically, we have very different views. Every one of you probably has a different political colour and are culturally very different. There are some Koreans and non-

Koreans, others first generation some second generation, Korean speaking and English speaking, some with different hobbies and interests, and finally some who are doing well economically and financially and some who are not doing well. Church is diverse. If the church consists of spiritually immature people who can only drink milk, the church will be divided, and many people will get hurt.

We have seen this as a historical example, the Korean community in the early immigrant life. They fought so much with each other and so many people got hurt in the middle. We'll have to spiritually grow to bring unity and harmony in the church. Trying to make everybody like me is not the way to bring unity and harmony. If you have enough influence and power, you may achieve uniformity, but that's not unity. Uniformity is not in unity. If you have enough power, you can have a small group and build uniformity and think alike, do things together, but that is not uniform.

Unity Among Everyone

A unity is possible only when there is diversity unity is possible, unity without is not unity. Harmony is possible only when they there are different notes. When you sing in unison, you cannot bring harmony. So, unity is a very different picture from uniformity. Saint Paul knew very well this diverse character of community, and this is what he said in the same letter. We didn't read it today, but in the same letter he said in Chapter 12, "indeed the body does not consist of one member, but of many. It's not just one member, and diverse people are in the community". Saint Paul said that "you have no right to tell another member that you don't belong here". In other words cliquishness, Paul does not like that kind of attitude. All the racism and sexism, all go together. Whenever there is a problem, the people tell immigrants, go home, go back to your own country. I mean, they were born here, they lived here all their lives and often days they go home.

That kind of attitude Paul does not allow. This is what Saint Paul said "I cannot see to the hand, I have no need of you because you don't look like I, nor again the head to the feet. I have no need of you". That's not the right thing to do in the Christian community or in our society, or a larger global community. That's not something that you are to say to each other. We all belong to this earth. We all belong here. We are all different, but we are one that is a miracle. We are all different, but we are one. Everyone is

welcomed. This is what Saint Paul said, “Now there are varieties of gifts, varieties of services, and varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone”. When you look at all the red, our varieties, that’s belongs to human beings, all of us, we’re all different, but unity belongs to God. The spirit, the Lord, all the blue letter, we may be all different, but God is the same. We have to understand this very basic composition of the church. We are all different and that is the face of the church. Don’t try to coerce each other to be like you.

Accept, allow each other to be the way they authentically are. That’s what Christian community is all about. We don’t achieve oneness by coercing other people to be like me. We achieve oneness, only by valuing each other, each person values each person’s gift and what each person can bring to the community. When we start valuing that, then unity becomes reality. Saint Paul recognized this very well when he said, “I only planted the church and Apollos watered it, so who cares if I planted it and who cares if Apollos watered it? We’re nobody we are nothing, but it is God who brings growth”. Look at that. 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 strength. My friends power, device, love unites power by its nature, device and power rules. There’s always powerful, the powerless, the haves and have nots, the rich and the poor, white and black. Whenever you try to build a community with power, there will be division, whether it’s a personal, moral, spiritual or even religious power. When power starts ruling the community, the community divides, but when the love rules the community, it brings unity.

The One Who Can Bring Unity

When you plant a church with love and sacrifice, the church will grow with the help of God. Growth comes from God. What we do is nothing and will not bring growth. When we serve with him, with humility and love, God will use us to bring growth. I realized this truth, I can never bring unity. We can never bring unity. I only humbly serve. Only God brings unity. Unity is God’s gift for all of us. Recognizing that we serve each other with love and humility and what love looks like, what does love look like? It looks like this it’s very simply. Let me tell you, Saint Paul said “but God has so arranged the body giving the greater honour to the inferior member. That’s a secret. Give greater honour to the inferior number, a member that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for

one another. If one member suffers, all suffer with it. If one member is honored, all will rejoice together with it. That is what love looks like. If you truly have love, you always honour and lift up the one who is inferior to one who is broken.

That's what love looks like. You don't just honour the powerful. You don't just honour the popular ones, you honour the inferior member. That's what love looks like. That's very different from the teaching, a message of this world. When you build a church with a love, this, you will be able to see that is a sign of a community. Whether that community is built by love or power. When you see the community that is built by love, you'll see that members appreciating and honoring the inferior members, and I do believe that this applies to global community too. We have to honour those countries. We have to honour those people who are oppressed, suppressed, rejected because of their lack of power. We don't conquer them. You don't trample upon them. The greater honour to the inferior member of the global community, that's what Paul's teaching is all about. The country that is run by power will divide and ultimately collapse, that's what history tells us. Any country that is run only by power will divide, collapse, decline. Even though it is the empire, there'll be a decline of the empire. For the country that is run by love, justice and compassion, will unite and grow. That's what we believe. That's what Christians believe. Together we stand.

Whenever I look at Korea, the only country that is divided politically in every way. I hope that there is unity, and when I look at the global community right now, every day I get saddened and every day I read the newspaper, I get saddened because we are fragmented. This whole world is divided, fragmented into pieces. Everybody is so hungry for power, for concurring. We have to restore love, justice, and compassion so that we can create the Kingdom of God. God may build the Kingdom of God. That's what I pray. May God's rule come. May God's kingdom come. May We human beings repent of our sins of greed and let God of compassion rule, then unity will be reality.

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 it 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 must leave it in God's hands instead of taking charge since it's so important? 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 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 "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

Suddenly, 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 suddenly, 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 occasionally 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 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.

Friend of God

August 8, 2017

John 15:12-17

Many People Live with the Wrong Image of God

I think many people live with a wrong image of God, distorted image of God and this image of God is very important. What we think about God is very important. Of course, this image is not necessarily explicit image that you have. It's almost like subconscious that it is underneath. And that image is God is powerful and fearful that is image that we have, God is powerful and fearful. One of the rabbis describes about his congregation member or member of his synagogue. The girl who just went to university first year, one day she just fell and dropped dead, and the school did not know how to communicate that to parents, but finally, barely. They called the parents and let them know that your daughter on the way to the class, she kind of collapsed and died.

It was too late for them to do anything. So, the parents came and then they didn't know what to do. They were very disturbed. And then the next time they went to the synagogue and met with this rabbi. And the first thing that they said to the rabbi was, "rabbi at the last Yom Kippur we didn't fast." In other words, because they didn't fast. This tragedy happened. So, this kind of a powerful image and fearful image of God we have and depending on what image you have about God, your life is shaped very much depending on what you think every day your life is very much shaped and then all you have is powerful image of God. But to know that God is powerful, you do not need any insight. Even Asian people, they knew that God is powerful. So, they all gave sacrifice to appease God.

God is Not Just Powerful, God is Love

So, then nothing bad may happen to them. So even Asian people, they knew that God was powerful. They didn't need any insight about God and people still live with that image. The powerful God image. I'm not saying that God is not powerful, but Jesus came to tell us. Something else about God. He came to show us that God is not just powerful. God is love. That's what he came to tell us. God is love for God so loved the world that he

gave his only son, Jesus Christ came to tell us to show us that God is love. This is what 1st John said, beloved, let us love one another because love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God. For God is love. God does not just love. God is love. He claims that God is love and that's what Jesus Christ came to tell us. Why? Because we don't know that. I mean he had to come all the way down to us to tell us that God is love because we don't believe that we don't have that image within us.

Jesus wanted to restore that understanding of God because we human beings don't live with that understanding that God is love. Subconsciously the only image that we have is that God is powerful and scary. This is what Jesus said today. I do not call you servants any longer because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends because I've made known to you everything that I have heard from the father that is a radical image of God, God being our friend, but come to think of it, it's not a new concept that Jesus created. God being a friend. That image is also in the Old Testament. They described the relationship between Moses and God. As friend, relationship, friendship. Exodus 30 3:11 he says, "thus the Lord used to speak to Moses, face to face as one speaks to a friend, so he already in the Old Testament, Moses and God were like friends and God called also Abraham as friends. That's how Isaiah, saw the relationship between Abraham and God. This is what Isaiah says, Isaiah 41: 8, "but you Israel, my servant Jacob, whom I have chosen the offspring of Abraham, my friend, we are God's friends. That's what Jesus said. I don't call you any longer servants. I call you my friend. The fearful God or the fearful God that we thought that fearful God came down to us to be our friend. That is a theology of incarnation that is a core of what incarnation is all about, that God far away who looks at us with fearful, scary eyes and every single move that we make and ready to make judgment upon us. We thought that that is kind of image of God, but then God came down to us and became our friend

God is Your Friend

And that is the understanding of incarnation. God is right here with us talking to us, embracing us and comforting us, but still in our mind. We put God way out there because we are too scared of thinking of God. We are too scared to have God around me. We feel that we are too dirty to have God near me, so as far as possible, I want to get away from God. But when

you understand that God is your friend, your whole life changes. When you have this new image of God, your life changes. Your thinking changes. When God becomes our friend, you have the best friend, no other human being can provide that kind of friendship to you. All other friends are not as perfect as God is.

This is what Jesus said. "No one has greater love than this to lay down one's life for one's friends." That's what Jesus did to his friends. He made us his friends and then he laid down his life for us. Do you have that kind of friend? I don't have the friend who laid down his life for you. That's the best friend you can ever have. To most of us friends are just friends whom you play with. When you have a hard time, when you go through difficulties and troubles and pain and suffering, they will not last too long, very long. They'll be there for a while, but they cannot be with you forever. And they will not lay down their lives for you.

God Chose You as Friends of God

If you have that kind of friend, you're a lucky one. The wonderful thing about this friendship is that I didn't choose it. God chose us. John 15, 16 said, you did not choose me, but I chose you. You don't need to have the fear of rejection because God chose us. Jesus chose prostitutes, tax collectors and sinners. We don't usually choose those people as friends, but Jesus chose them as friends, not because they're worthy, but because they need friends. They were the social outcast. Nobody wanted to be friends with them. Nobody wanted to be around them, so they had no friends in a way that's why they needed friends Jesus chose them to be friends because they needed friends. That's how Jesus understands friendship, to be. For us, friends are those who are like me, who can play with me. You may feel you're not worthy. You may not be that popular. You may not have that charisma to draw people. You may not have attractive qualities, but God chose you as friends of God. Rejection hurts, betrayal hurts. Jesus received rejection and betrayal from his friends, but he never rejected them, and Jesus never rejects us.

When you start seeing God not as a scary powerful being out there, but as friend, something changes within you, that you will get to know God so intimately, unless God becomes your friend, you cannot know God. You'll have a lot of concepts of God, but you cannot really intimately understand

and know God only when God becomes your friend, you can get to know God very intimately. Jesus said, this is what you just said. "I do not call you servants any longer because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I called you friends because I have made known to you everything that I've heard from my father. So, when you have that intimate relationship with God, you get to know God very intimately and that's how your existence become fruitful. As you get to know God intimately, your existence becomes fruitful. In John 15, 16, Jesus said, "and I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last so that the father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. The father will give you whatever you do, you ask in Jesus' name," and that gives me confidence. Whatever I ask God, God will give me. That gives me tremendous confidence. God will give you what you're asking for and then you will have that confidence in life

Knowing God is Your Friend Liberates You

And you will love being alone with God, God becomes your most intimate friends. You can say almost anything you want, and you need, and you're not scared of being lonely. You are not scared of being alone because you are alone with God. Walk with God you talk with God. You laugh with God. You cry with God. God becomes your best friend. Knowing God, knowing that God is your friend is the most liberating experience you can ever have, and you'll be free from fear. That's why Jesus said love casts out fear. At the end of today's scripture, Jesus said, "I'm giving you these commands so that you may love one another as God is a friend to us, be friends to each other. That's what community is all about. Be a friend. Be a friend to each other. Be Nice to each other, be kind to each other. If you can show your love to each other, being a friend to another human being, that's the best thing you can do while you live. Be a friend to each other.

Fear and Love

August 20, 2017

Psalm 27:1-6

Fear is Everywhere

These are words of David. Last week we reflected on King David. I said that King David was like the engine of Israel. They could never forget King David, and today I'd like to talk about fear in wake of all these things happening and the violence, hatred, and bigotry that are all around us. There are so many people who are trembling with fear. Fear is something that we all have in our mind. It's probably one of the most powerful emotions that prevent us to live a fulfilling life. We have to learn to overcome our fear. As long as we have fear, we cannot live a life with confidence. Fear itself is not bad. Without fear will not be able to feel the danger that is imminent around us. Fear alerts us and makes us ready to deal with the danger.

In Barcelona, Mr. Gray, a Canadian, was right there when the attack happened. With his family two, three children – they're a little older – as soon as they saw something going on, they ran into a hotel. And then they stayed there for five hours without really knowing what was going on. Mr. Gray, he said the scariest thing in the hotel. What he said was that they didn't know what was going on. They didn't know if there was one truck, or they might've thought that a group of terrorists might come in with guns, and they were able to hear some gunshots too. So they thought, what if they come into the hotel? What if they're right here in the hotel? There were so scared, and for five hours they just stayed in that hotel.

Fear That Paralyzes

That is the street where Will proposed to Grace. We were just there a few years ago. And that happened. Fear is a natural reaction from people who face danger, but there's also fear that paralyzes us. Not preparing us to fight against danger or preparing for the danger, but there is a fear that takes away all our energy and desire. It just makes us feel totally helpless. It paralyzes us. We cannot do anything once we are captured by this fear.

We freeze with this fear. Usually, fear comes from seeing the real danger that is imminent around you but this kind of fear has nothing to do with real danger that is imminent to you. It is that they are just thinking about the possibility of danger. For example, if you had a painful memory of failure, you will have fear of failure. You cannot do anything because you have this fear of failure.

Changjoo, who is our conductor, he's going to Australia to study. And yesterday he did a wonderful performance. It was such beautiful music that he powerfully played, and he changed it so much, and we enjoyed it so much. But I'm sure he went through many, many hours of fear of failure. "What if I cannot master this?" But he did not give up. He kept on practicing and playing and ultimately, he was able to perform the beautiful piece.

We all sometimes have a kind of unnecessary fear. You may say, if you had a big car accident, you will have a fear of driving. If you're hurt by people, you will have a fear of people or relationships. Some kids are bitten by dogs and even when they're grown up, they're scared of dogs. We have learned this fear through painful life experiences and this kind of fear is not always helpful. It takes away energy and confidence from us. It hinders us from living with confidence. It creates neurotic anxiety. Living with this kind of fear is not fun. Living with this kind of fear makes us very passive.

David and Goliath

You know what fear does? Fear affects the way we see things. Fear makes us see problems bigger than they are. We should see problems as they are. Then we should be able to see the solution, but when you see the problem is much bigger than it is, then you will know you'll freeze. You will know any solution to the problems. We talked about Goliath and David the Israelites. They saw Goliath much, much bigger than he was, so they thought, we have no solution since we're so scared of Goliath, but David saw Goliath. He could see that Goliath was strong, but at the same time, David was able to see his weaknesses too, and he attacked those weaknesses. That's how he overcame Goliath.

Many times, we fall into the problems because we see them as much bigger than they are. We need to learn to see things as they are, then we'll get better insight about our problems. Don't pull it up when you have

problems. Don't blow them up. See them as they are, and then you'll be able to see the solution. You will feel scared not because of our problems, but often because of our fear about problems. If you don't have fear, you will be able to overcome those problems, but because of fear of your problems, sometimes we feel what David felt. He experienced many crises in his life. He crept in totally crushed by fear. You know when problems come right before you, you can handle that because you have coming up, so you can handle the problems, but once you get home, you sit down by yourself.

How Do You Deal With Fear?

All of us are have let this fearful thinking and emotion overwhelm us, and we lose there. So, David, probably when he was alone, these kinds of fears, all kinds of fears probably attacked, but somehow David knew how to deal with his fear. I think that's very important, knowing how to deal with fear, because we all live with fear. But how do you deal with fear?

This is David's secret. David said, the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid.

He had confidence in God. Every time a fearful situation arose. He didn't focus on his fear, but he focused on God. That is the secret of overcoming our fear.

Spiritual Territory

When fear attacks us and conquers us, we have to find the area in you that is not affected and occupied by fear. So, when fear attacks you, you have to think about the area that is not conquered and occupied by fear. I call that spiritual territory. We all have spiritual territory that is not occupied and conquered by fear.

That is the area that we need to hold onto. The part of you that looks to God. When you have the spiritual territory that is not totally paralyzed by fear, doubt will save you from fear. Give special attention to that spiritual territory, that part of consciousness he held onto when everything looks

hopeless. That part of consciousness sees hope. When everything looks impossible, that part of consciousness sees possibility. That part of consciousness made David confess in this way. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Evil is not to be Feared

After the terrorist attack in Barcelona, people said this, we will not fear. In other words, they paid attention to the future territory. That part of consciousness which is not occupied and conquered by fear. The very next day neo Nazis came out to make a demonstration, to say that immigration is not good, and Muslims have to be. They came out to proclaim that they fit right there. People in Barcelona came out, said that they will not let our city be conquered by fear. They will not let our city be conquered by racism, and we will not let our city be totally paralyzed by fear. That is courageous spirit. That is the spiritual territory. They paid attention to that consciousness. They held onto that. Evil is not to be feared. Injustice is not to be feared. Patriotism, bigotry, racism, violence are not to be feared.

Love Gives You Courage

God created us so that we can fight against those things. Fear was supposed to have fear over those things. That's the future. What is the best way to expand spiritually? I believe that it is love. Love expands that spiritual territory. Love gives you courage. When you have love, you have courage. Now, when you have power, only when you have love, you have courage. Love casts out all fear. This is what John says in 1 John, there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out. Fear for fear has to do with punishment and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. Love is what expands the spiritual territory. I hope that your love for God may expand that mutual territory within you. This is what David said, one thing I asked of the Lord that will I seek after to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and the choir in his temple. He was surrounded by enemies, but he was talking about love for the Lord. He had love for God. Love for God gave it to them. Courage. Now justice gives you courage. Love for truth gives you the courage. Love for life gives you courage. Be courageous. Don't fear. Fear and love are like darkness

and light. When the light comes, darkness cannot stay. When love comes, fear cannot stay.

God's Love

We love worse within us. Fear slowly disappears from us. You can never be separated from God's love. In other words, you can always overcome your fear. This is what St Paul discovered. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us, for I'm convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing in the world can separate us from the love of God. Let us not fear the injustice that is not fear, hatred, bigotry, and violence. Let us not fear anything that tries to destroy human goodness. Josh mentioned God is good and goodness will cherish the goodness of God and we will also cherish human goodness. We'll stand up against anything that tries to destroy the human spirit.

God gave the United States so much power, so much resources, so many talented people. They're supposed to exercise good leadership to build this global community better than it is. I see so much division. "America first." That's not a Christian slogan. Christian slogan is others. First Task Christian slogan. That's not Christian message. This is the time to stand up with courage. I'm glad that there's demonstrations everywhere in cities, big cities, Boston, Britain, and everywhere.

This is the Time

This is the time for us Christians to stand up for what we believe, have courage, live out what Jesus commanded you to do. Don't be silent. Speak up against evil, and any kind of prejudice.

This is the time for us to embrace each other. Love each other, accept each other. This swirl, this globe is to be shared, not to be conquered.

Welcoming Others

July 15, 2018

Matthew 10:40-42

Hospitality

Hospitality. That's a beautiful word, and hospitality is a very important aspect of living as a human. Being hospitable makes other people feel welcome, appreciated, valued and loved. That's what we human beings should do. We should make other people feel welcomed, appreciated and valued. You have no right to make other people feel miserable. You have no right to make other people feel small. We have all the responsibility to make other people feel important, to make other people big, great, valued. That's what we are called to do, that's what human beings should do, whoever we meet, whether they're strangers or family members or friends, we should always make other people feel welcomed, accepted, loved, and valued.

That's the kind of culture that I grew up with when I was back in Korea. The whole village, the whole town was like family. I could go to anybody's house and ask for food if I'm hungry. And then my friend's parents, I'm like their son, they always provide something to eat. Korean culture is like that, anybody comes under your roof, you never send them away hungry. You always provide something to eat. I don't know these days whether it's like that in Korea or not. They live in condos and all that. But when I grew up, that was the culture that I lived in. And I thought it was just a Korean culture that I grew up with. But when I went to Africa they were exactly the same, they treated me like a precious person, the king, the most important person in the world, they tribute me with such a high respect. That's what human beings are supposed to do to each other. And I thought it was just Korean culture or African culture, but it's a biblical culture.

Treat Everyone as if They Were an Angel

When Abraham had three strangers and they were about to just pass by Abraham never let them go without feeding them. So, Abraham got lambs and they had a feast. And then later he realized that they were angels, not just strangers, but there were angels. And this is what the Hebrew writer

said, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it.” You entertain a stranger like an angel. That’s what we should do. Whoever we meet, we should really treat them like angels, welcoming strangers or somebody should be our basic human character and helping each other’s needs is basic humanity. That’s why we support the refugee program very strongly. And we invited an Afghanistan family. I mean, last time we also invited a Syrian family. Our church sponsored these people to welcome the stranger to welcome people. And right now, they’re living are very well in this country, Canada.

During my vacation I went to Boston to visit my grandson, he’s a two-year-old. And when I got there, they had a big party for the second birthday of Charlie and the whole week they prepared all kinds of food, Kalbi, Chinese, skewers and crab legs and all that, you name it. They prepared so much, and they decorated the Hawaiian kind of the theme of Moana. So, they had a Hawaiian theme and decorated the whole house. And then they said because we’re very busy preparing for this, can you welcome the people? So, I was there to welcome all the people who came, and I was talking with a neighbour, he came from Jamaica and I realized that he has 11 siblings, and he was talking about his life. And then one of his sisters, she was a dentist and she quit just like Simon and then became a minister. And we were talking and while watching them be hospitable to the people I felt good, that’s what we should do.

I’m going to Madagascar in October and when I went to Madagascar, they’re all poor. No one is rich there. So, when I went to South Africa, some people are rich, some people are poor, but in Madagascar everybody is poor. But even with their limited resources, they really treated me with huge hospitality. They treated me with the best that they could. And I felt so welcomed and loved.

Serving

I once had a car accident while I was an intern moderator for Kitchener Waterloo church. You know Sunday afternoons, I’m very tired because it’s after service and all that. I get tired and I had a meeting in Waterloo, but it’s an hour away. When I was driving, I started falling asleep on the 401. I really pinched myself, I sang loud and then yelled and did all kinds of things. I tried to wake myself up and I barely made it and I was going off to

highway 8 to go to Waterloo and - “finally I got here” and I fell asleep on highway 8 and by the time I woke up I was on the paved shoulder. I tried to control my car. It was winter, and I couldn’t control my car and it went into the ditch, luckily there was lots of snow in the ditch. So, I survived. That’s how I’m speaking to you now. But while I was there waiting for a tow truck for about an hour, almost every car stopped by just to see if I’m, okay. And later it kind of became you know a nuisance. And every time I came out and said, “I’m okay.” So, I just came out and told everyone, “I’m okay. Just pass.” Right, but at the time, I feel proud to be Canadian. They care when somebody is in trouble, they don’t just pass by, they care, they stop doing whatever they are doing, to see how I’m doing. That’s what hospitality is, that’s what human being should do to each other.

Once I took the eldest Korean in our church, I went to Niagara Falls and we’re under the roof. And then there were about four groups there. And I looked around all four groups. They were cooking their own thing and then there was a Korean group from another church and there is an Afghanistan group and then there were people from Brock University, geological society or something like that. And then while I was there, I was prompted by the spirit, somehow to go and visit them. They’re your neighbours, go visit them. So, you know, I’m kind of an introvert. I don’t really like talking to strangers and all that. It takes extra energy for me to do that. I was sitting there and I’m just comfortable with my group just eating kalbi and all this stuff, but the spirit kind of prompted me to go and talk to them. So, I went to this group and this person started talking to me and he started crying. He said his wife just passed away one month ago and he was so sad, and he was talking about his whole life and I was listening to him.

And then after saying bye, I went to the Afghanistan group, one of them said that he had 80 members of his family. One family was bigger than our whole group. When I went there, he brought his wife, his brother in law, sister in law, he introduced to everyone from his family. And I said to myself, this is what human life is supposed to be about. We are not strangers to each other. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Hospitality, when new people come to our church, I hope that we can welcome them with love and appreciation. We should make them feel at home, comfortable.

Hospitality is a serving attitude. You serve other people’s needs, that should be at the bottom of all human life, not just Christian life, all human life. We need to serve each other’s needs. Jesus taught us that. He said, I

did not come to be served. I came to serve, that's what Jesus did, and he showed us what life we should live through his parable, the Good Samaritan parable. Somebody was in trouble and this person stopped doing everything and he went down to help that person. That's what human life should be like. Jesus came to this world with a spirit of hospitality, but this world accepted him with hostility. They did not accept him. They treated him with hostility. He came with hospitality, but people treated him with hostility. This is what John said. "He came to what was his own and his own people did not accept him." Lack of hospitality is a symptom of the darkness of sin. You don't have that spirit of hospitality, that means you have the darkness of sin.

Exercise the Life of Hospitality

In the world we live in, as Steve eloquently prayed, we see hostility rather than the hospitality. We need to turn hostility into hospitality. Being hospitable is not always easy because we have this fear within us and sometimes we reject other people, but we should turn our hearts into hospitality so that we may be able to welcome other people with love and care. We need to develop a new kind of leadership. The leadership of hospitality, the leadership of serving Jesus showed us that kind of leadership he knelt and washed the feet of the disciples. He served them. Unless you humble yourself, lower yourself and kneel, you cannot be hospitable to other people. You cannot serve other people.

I hope that we can build up that kind of spirit, are the people who are in trouble around you? Are there people who are in need around you? Are there people who are in pain around you? They are your brothers and sisters. You cannot just neglect them. You cannot just pass by them. You must stop doing whatever you were doing and then take care of their needs. Be with them, pray with them, show them that you care. That's what community is all about. That's what humanity is all about. We should build that kind of world, and then you will be the first people who do that. Even though the world does not have it, we Christians should exercise the life of hospitality. There are a lot of people around you who need your care. They don't say it, they sometimes suffer silently. Let us look around, who is in need and let us be their friends.