



*Welcoming
Heart*

REV. IN KEE KIM



Scripture Passage

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle

and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

NRSV

Sermon

Welcoming Heart

Jesus described people in his generation. I realized that it's not much different from ours. ***"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn" (Matthew 11:17).*** People have become so desensitized that they could feel neither joy nor sadness. It is pretty sad. I don't want to live in that kind of world. I will feel very lonely. Being happy with those who are happy and crying with those who cry – that's what life is, isn't it? If we can not do that, what is life? Without that, what is joy? Living together does not mean just living together physically. Living together means to understand each other, feel for each other's hurt and sadness and celebrate life's joy and sadness together. That's what life is. That is what the spiritual community is all about. I am very thankful for our spiritual community. I see that kind of sharing in this community. Even in this pandemic, you have been strong together. This pandemic could not shake you. I pray that our care becomes deeper and deeper. We have helped Evangel Hall. We have helped South Africa. We even helped Madagascar. Elders, with

Simon, went around with care packages and at each home they prayed for the people. We also prepared masks for the people that were most affected in the Jane and Finch area. Even in this pandemic, we really celebrate and recognize the importance of sharing with each other.

What we ask for each other is not a huge favor. It doesn't cost a lot of money either. All we need is a little care. All we need is to let people know that I'm with you. I think of you. I care about you. Encouraging words, caring heart; that's what we need.

Hostility and Criticism

But Jesus said something disturbing. Not only were they desensitized, their problem was deeper than that. He said this, ***"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!"*** (Matthew 11:18, 19). This is disturbing. John and Jesus were good people. They tried their best to help people. But they were very different. John was an ascetic. And Jesus was not. John ate locusts and wild honey but Jesus spent time with sinners and tax

collectors, eating and drinking. But they criticized both. They said John the Baptist had a demon and Jesus is a drunkard, a glutton.

When we see that, they were not just desensitized. They were not just incapable of feeling people's joy and sadness. They had this hostility within them. A dark spirit. They were filled with the critical spirit. They had darkness within them. They could only see the negative side of people. They saw the speck in others' eyes but they didn't see the log in their own eyes. They criticized others not because they were better than them but because they had this dark spirit within them. When you have this attitude, you will destroy your family, your church, and the society you live in. I see so much criticism around me. So much judgmentally attitude. So many negative things around you. I don't want to hear that any more. It's too toxic. Too critical, too judgmental. When we live like this our relationships will be ruined. If people with power have this attitude, they will definitely oppress those who are weak and vulnerable; they will insult them and abuse them. They will make weak people very vulnerable and make them feel powerless and miserable.

That was what the scribes and the Pharisees did to the

weak people. ***“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practise what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them” (Matthew***

23:1-4). Jesus said that the scribes and the Pharisees sat on Moses’ seat. That meant they were sitting on judgement’s seat. They used the law and pointed out people’s faults and criticized them and tried to control them. The law is a beautiful thing that teaches us how we ought to live but scribes and Pharisees used it as their weapon to attack others. They condemned people in the name of God, but they were not willing to lift their finger to help them be lifted from their burdens. Jesus saw that so clearly. Jesus saw how many people are struggling with their sins, their burdens, their problems, and their weaknesses. They were all carrying their heavy burdens.

A Place of Rest

Jesus said to them, ***“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will***

give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). How different Jesus is from the Pharisees. How refreshing. How inspiring. How sweet the sound of this message is. People who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens are not those who are physically difficult because of their labour. They are those who are struggling with problems in their lives. Jesus embraced those who are struggling with the burdens of life. He could sit on judgement's seat. He was higher than Moses. He could sit on judgement's seat and judge us. And we would have had nothing to say. Because we are all sinners. But Jesus did not sit on judgment's seat. He came down. He said, "I am gentle and humble in heart." You may find it funny that he talks about himself being humble. When we do that, people will say that you are quite arrogant in saying that. What Jesus meant was: I am not sitting on judgment's seat. I am down here with you. There is no bigger humility than God becoming a human being. And yet Jesus did not sit on judgment's seat but sat with sinners and ate and drank with them. This is the different between Jesus and the Pharisees.

Healing

This is how healing happens. Healing is not something that the powerful one gives to the weaker one. Giving

comfort is not a charity that the one who has everything gives to those who lost everything. Healing cannot happen by pointing out one's mistakes. Healing can never happen by pointing out mistakes. Only when we embrace their hurt and pain, then healing happens. That's why healing, on the part of the healer there is always suffering, difficulty, hardships.

At the New Year retreat, we reflected on the hospitality of Henri Nouwen. We reflected on how hostility can change to hospitality. He said about hospitality in this way. Hospitality is to provide a safe place where people can work out their own changes. He gave this analogy. *"When we say, 'You can be my guest if you believe what I believe, think the way I think and behave as I do,' we offer love under a condition for or for a price."*

Being hospitable is not easy. Being a healer is not easy. So many people want to heal others by not lifting a finger, by not hurting, by not suffering at all. They think that by pointing out people's mistakes, they can heal them. That's a mistake. That's a misconception.

Real healing is not something we can give to others. When we are simply with them and grieve with them

and suffer with them, they will work out their own healings because God is with them. Each person has the healing power within him/her because God is with them. We just have to be with them so that they feel empowered. It is not we who heal but God who heals. What we can do is to be gentle and humble. Gentle, not to aggravate their hurt. Humble, not to make them feel insulted. So healing happens not by our power but by our love.

Invitation and Desire

Jesus invites us. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens... There is no condition. All you need is your desire. Desire to have rest. Desire to come. Desire to have your burdens lifted. And Jesus said, I will give you rest. This rest is not a temporary rest. It is the eternal peace, the peace the world cannot give. The peace that the world does not know. The peace that is beyond our comprehension.

This is the invitation of God. The prophet Isaiah said about this great invitation. ***“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you***

spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food” (Isaiah 55:1, 2). My friends, I know that you are burdened. I know that you have received a lot of criticisms in your life. Come to Jesus. Lay down your burdens You will experience the abundance of life. Let us follow the example of Jesus. Instead of being a slave to our critical spirit, let us be gentle. Let us be humble so that through our life other people may find true comfort.