

With the Affection of Jesus Christ

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Introduction

“God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:8).

The Apostle Paul loved the brothers and sisters of the Philippian church with the affection of Jesus Christ. He loved them as Himself, following the commandment of Jesus (Mt. 22:39; Mk. 12:31; Lk. 10:27). Paul sincerely cared for the brothers and sisters of the Philippian church with the affection of Jesus Christ. In other words, he longed for them with the love of Jesus. Furthermore, Paul prayed for the brothers and sisters of the Philippian church with the affection of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:9-11). He always thought of them and earnestly prayed to God for them whenever he remembered them. When he prayed for them, he thanked God with joy (v. 4). The reason for this was that the brothers and sisters of the Philippian church had been actively participating in Paul's gospel work since the beginning of the church (v. 5).

I desire to love my fellow believers as Paul did, with the affection of Jesus Christ, becoming one with them in the Lord. I want to seek them with the affection of Jesus Christ. Additionally, I want to comfort each one of them individually. Like the son of encouragement, Barnabas, I continue to pray that the Lord would establish me as a burning comforter of love. I wish to see those in pain whom the Lord sees, to hear their cries that the Lord hears, and to be the hands and feet of the Lord to comfort them with the affection of Jesus Christ. I hope and pray that the comforting Holy Spirit would bring God's word to their minds, allowing them to share in it individually, and that the Holy Spirit would provide comfort to each one of them.

In 2014, our church motto was "With the Affection of Jesus Christ," with the key verse being Philippians 1:8. That year, I primarily proclaimed God's word, focusing on the New Testament, particularly the Gospel of Matthew. It wasn't until about four years later that I selected a few of the messages I preached during that time and compiled them into a meditation book under the title "With the Affection of Jesus Christ." If it is the Lord's will, I hope and pray that through this meditation book, even if just for a while, it may be beneficial in loving a soul with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Wishing to become a burning comforter of love,

James Kim (June 2018, expressing gratitude to the Lord for precious encounters through online ministry)

With the Affection of Jesus Christ

**“God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus”
(Philippians 1:8).**

Our church motto is "With the Affection of Jesus Christ." The key verse for our motto is Philippians 1:8, which states, "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." Our goal is to love our neighbors with the affection of Jesus Christ. How can we love our neighbors? I would like to receive teachings on three aspects and hope that both you and I diligently obey them.

First, let us all love our neighbors with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Look at Philippians 1:8 - "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." Expressing our love for our neighbors with the affection of Jesus Christ means desiring our neighbors with the love of Jesus. Here, desiring our neighbors can be understood in two ways:

(1) We must yearn our neighbors with the love of Jesus.

Consider Jeremiah 31:20 – “Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore, my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him,” declares the Lord.” When God the Father rebukes and speaks against us, His beloved children, He still deeply thinks of us. And the heart of God the Father is moved with compassion for us. The Bible says, "My heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him" (v. 20). Following the example of God the Father, who regards us with compassion and delight, we should also compassionately and affectionately regard our neighbors in our love for them.

(2) Expressing our love for our neighbors with the affection of Jesus Christ means we should jealously desire our neighbors.

Look at James 4:5 – “Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: ‘He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?’” The Bible states that the Holy Spirit dwelling within us jealously longs for us. As the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of love within us, He enables us to jealously love our neighbors, fostering affection. Therefore, in our love and affection for our neighbors, we must jealously desire them. It is essential to note that in the context of relationships, there is not only negative envy but also positive envy that should be present, similar to how God, with a jealous love, desires us, His people. In our marital relationships, just as we are called to desire one another with God's jealousy, this is true marital love. Likewise, we should love and cherish our neighbors.

Second, let us all pray for our neighbors with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Look at Philippians 1:9-11: "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God." What is the highest expression of love that we can show for our neighbors? It is prayer. If we have the affection of Jesus Christ, loving and desiring our neighbors, we should first do what for our neighbors? It is to kneel down and pray to God the Father for our neighbors. Praying, we must earnestly lift our hearts to God the Father for our neighbors, especially those facing pain and adversity. Praying, we should persistently seek God's intervention until our prayers are answered. The Apostle Paul did this for the saints in the Philippian church, as seen in Philippians 1:4. He prayed for them, not just once or twice, but "always" (v. 4). This indicates that Paul always thought of the saints in the Philippian church (verse 3) and, whenever he thought of them, he earnestly prayed to God for them. He thanked God each time he prayed (v. 3), and he joyfully made requests for them (v. 4). The reason was that they had been actively participating in the work for the gospel since the first day (v. 5). Furthermore, when Paul prayed for the saints in the Philippian church, he did so with confidence in his heart. What was that confidence? Look at Philippians 1:6 - "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Paul had confidence because he knew that the Lord, who made a covenant with them, had already begun a good work (the work of salvation) in the saints of the Philippian church and would complete it. Praying with such confidence, thanksgiving, and joy, Paul specifically prayed for the saints in the Philippian church, focusing on "love" (v. 9). What kind of love? Love that abounds more and more in knowledge and depth of insight. Paul prayed for this purpose so that the outcome would be that the saints in the Philippian church could discern what is best, be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, and be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, ultimately glorifying and praising God (vv. 9-11).

We too should offer such prayers to God the Father for our neighbors. We should earnestly implore God the Father to abundantly produce the fruit of love in our neighbors. In our prayers, let us ask that the love of our neighbors may abound more and more in knowledge and all discernment. Therefore, let us pray that we, along with you, may be

established as Christ-followers who discern what is excellent, being sincere and blameless, living lives worthy of the gospel.

Third and last, let us all actively participate in the work of spreading the gospel with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Look at Philippians 1:5 - "because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." When the Apostle Paul thought about the saints of the Philippian church, he thanked God. And whenever he prayed for them, he prayed with joy (vv. 3-4). The reason was that the saints of the Philippian church had been actively participating in Paul's gospel work since the beginning (v. 5). This specifically means that the saints of the Philippian church had provided material support needed for Paul's gospel preaching (Yoon-seon Park). In addition, they would have participated in prayer for Paul's gospel proclamation (MacDonald). Therefore, let all of us actively participate even more in the work of the gospel. Let us continue to pray for and financially support the missionaries supported by our church. Let us pray and provide material support for Pastor Gomez and his wife, who are doing missionary work in Tijuana, Mexico, and Elder Yoon and Missionary Harry and Ryan, who are involved in medical missions and theological education in the Philippines. Also, let us continue to pray and financially support Missionary Manny Kim and others who are doing missionary work in Ensenada, Mexico. Additionally, let us pray and provide both prayer and financial support for the missionary couple and their family who are serving in Arizona State University. Let us pray and provide prayer and financial support for Pastor Choi and his family, as well as the theology students, at True Love Church in Mongolia. Furthermore, one important task that all of us, as a church, should engage in with the affection of Jesus Christ is evangelism. Let us pray and actively reach out to our neighbors and the people in our local community with a compassionate heart for those who do not know Jesus. Let us put effort into inviting them to the church. May the remaining days of our lives be dedicated to putting more effort into spreading the gospel.

The Command of Jesus

[Matthew 10:1-20]

As we welcome the new year, we received a message during the New Year Joint Worship to love our neighbors with the affection of Jesus Christ. We were encouraged to love our neighbors with the affection of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:8), pray for them (vv. 9-11), and participate together in the work for the gospel (v. 5). Following that, during last week's Mission Sunday worship, through Pastor Emeritus Chang Kim, we learned about the missionary success in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:5-10). To succeed in missions, like Paul, we must first proclaim the gospel with words but also with power, the Holy Spirit, and great conviction (v. 5). When Paul conveyed God's message, the Thessalonians received it not as human words but as God's word (2:13). Despite many hardships, they received the word with the joy of the Holy Spirit, becoming imitators of Paul and the Lord (1:6). Furthermore, they became an example to believers in Macedonia and Achaia (1:7). The news of their faith in God spread so widely that there was no need for Paul and his companions to say anything (v. 8). They turned from idols to serve the living and true God, eagerly waiting for Jesus to return (vv. 9-10). Paul's successful mission in Thessalonica was rooted in his deep affection for the Thessalonians, willing to give not only the gospel but even his life for them (2:8). Why did Paul love the Thessalonians so much? The answer is found in 1 Thessalonians 1:4 - "For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you." Ultimately, Paul's successful mission was because God loved and chose them. Therefore, as the Lord has sent us into this world, we, too, are recipients of the sending. We have the responsibility to go to our homes, workplaces, and neighbors with the message of Jesus Christ. We are sent, and in our sending, we must proclaim the gospel with the affection of Jesus Christ, loving our neighbors as Paul loved the Thessalonians—with deep affection, fervent prayer, and tangible support for missionaries.

In today's passage, Matthew 10:1-20, we see a scene where Jesus calls His twelve disciples (Mt. 10:1), sends them into the world, and gives them instructions (v. 5). I want to meditate on three statements Jesus made to His disciples in this scene and glean the teachings God provides us.

The first statement from Jesus is, "Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel."

Look at Matthew 10:5-6: "These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" Do you think when the Lord sent us into this world, He commanded us only to go to those Koreans who do not believe in Jesus? Or do you think the Lord commanded us to go and proclaim the gospel to all people in the world? In the so-called Great Commission, Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus told His disciples, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." However, in today's passage, Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus sends His disciples, saying, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Why did Jesus not send His disciples to all Gentiles and nations but specifically said, "Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel"? A similar statement is found in Matthew 15:24 when a Canaanite woman approached Jesus, seeking healing for her demon-possessed daughter. Jesus responded, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Did Jesus truly send His disciples only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel? To answer this question, we must first understand who the "lost sheep" are. Look at Jeremiah 50:6 - "My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray, turning them away on the mountains. From mountain to hill they have gone. They have forgotten their fold." The "lost sheep" Jesus mentioned refer to God's people. More specifically, from the Old Testament perspective of the Old Covenant, they were the Jews. However, from the New Covenant perspective of the New Testament, they are the people whom God loves and chooses, whether Jews or Gentiles. So, when Jesus commanded His disciples to "go rather to the lost sheep of Israel," it was not a command to avoid the Gentiles at all costs. Instead, it emphasized giving priority to the Jews (MacArthur). That's why Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." When Jesus instructed His disciples to go to the lost sheep of Israel, He wasn't saying to avoid the Gentiles. It was about prioritizing those who needed spiritual healing and acknowledging their own spiritual sickness and need for a physician (Lk. 5:31-32) (MacArthur). Therefore, the command to go to the lost sheep of Israel meant that His disciples, first recognizing their spiritual need, should go to those in the Jewish community who were spiritually sick and needed a physician. Now, what did Jesus command His disciples to proclaim to the lost sheep of Israel? Look at Matthew 10:7 - "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" The disciples were to proclaim the same message that John the Baptist had previously declared, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 3:2). Jesus also echoed this message, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (4:17). Ultimately, Jesus instructed His twelve disciples to go and proclaim the same message He had proclaimed: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." When we hear about "the kingdom of heaven," we often think of a place we enter after death. The Bible describes this kingdom as a place where there is no more sorrow, pain, or death (Rev. 21:4). It is a place without curses, no more night, no need for lamps or the sun because God's glory illuminates everything (22:3-5). We will see the Lord face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). While we might associate the kingdom of heaven primarily with the afterlife, it also has a present reality. Jesus' message of "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" calls people to repentance, to turn from their ways and embrace God's rule in their lives here and now.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Are you ready to enter this kingdom? In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.' Jesus emphasizes that only those who do the will of His Father in heaven will enter the kingdom.

Doing the will of the Father essentially means doing the work of God (Jn. 6:29). So, what is the work of God? It is believing in the One whom God has sent. In other words, those who believe in Jesus enter the kingdom of heaven. Do you believe in Jesus? We are first called to go to the lost sheep in our homes and share the gospel of the kingdom. Following the Lord's command, we need to proclaim the gospel with the power He has given us. As Jesus said, 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8). We are to share the gospel with our family members who do not know Jesus, and then extend our witness to friends, coworkers, and neighbors. May the Lord continually expand the reach of our gospel proclamation in these areas.

Jesus' second statement is, "Find a worthy person among them and stay there until you leave."

Look at Matthew 10:11 - "Whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart." After instructing the twelve disciples to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (v. 6) and proclaim, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (v. 7), Jesus tells them, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay" (v. 8). How can they heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons? It is because Jesus called the twelve and gave them authority over unclean spirits and the ability to heal every disease and every affliction (v. 1). These abilities were freely given by the Lord. Therefore, Jesus says to them, "You received without paying; give without pay." In other words, with the freely received power, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, proclaiming, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," and use that power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons. After that, Jesus instructs them in verses 9-10 on what not to bring. For example, Jesus tells his disciples not to take gold, silver, or copper, not to take a bag, two tunics, or sandals. Why? The reason is that Jesus wanted his disciples to fully trust and rely on Him. The Lord had already prepared generous people to provide for their needs, both from the towns they visited and from those who would benefit from their ministry (MacArthur). Then Jesus instructs his disciples, "And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart" (v. 11).

As I meditate on these words of Jesus, I began to ponder who the worthy person that Jesus mentioned might be. Who exactly are these worthy individuals Jesus is referring to? Here, worthy individuals are those who receive Jesus' disciples with an open heart for their message (MacDonald). However, how could Jesus' disciples identify such people? Perhaps, they had to meet them in person and proclaim the gospel to find out. Therefore, Jesus instructs them to stay at the house of those who receive the gospel and whom the disciples consider as prepared by the Lord until they leave the area. Jesus also wishes them peace as they enter that house (v. 12). However, if anyone refuses to receive the disciples or listen to their words, Jesus instructs them to shake off the dust from their feet as a testimony against that house or town (v. 14). When thinking about these worthy individuals, I was reminded of what the Apostle John is talking about in 3 John, specifically about Gaius, who walks in the truth (3 Jn. 3-4). When John heard about Gaius walking in the truth, he greatly rejoiced (v. 3). But what does it mean for Gaius to walk in the truth? It means that he loved the brethren, even extending love to strangers, showing hospitality (vv. 5-6). Those who received love

from Gaius were encouraged to go out for the sake of the Name, receiving nothing from the Gentiles (v. 7). Therefore, John wrote in his letter to the beloved Gaius (v. 1), "You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God" (v. 6). In a Korean Modern Bible translation, it is expressed as, "You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God's service." This person is what Jesus refers to as the worthy person in Matthew 10:11. Jesus instructs His disciples to find such individuals, stay in their homes, and bring peace to them (v. 12). However, looking again at 3 John, besides Gaius, there is another person mentioned by the name of Diotrephes (3 Jn. 9). About Diotrephes, John says he loves to be first, rejecting the authority of the apostles (v. 9), speaking malicious words against them (v. 10), and even refusing to welcome the brethren and hindering those who want to do so, expelling them from the church (v. 10). Can you imagine what would happen if Jesus' disciples, following the command of their Lord, went to the lost sheep of the house of Israel but instead of meeting someone like Gaius, they encountered someone like Diotrephes? Such a person would not only refuse to welcome the disciples into their home but would also not listen to their words (Mt. 10:14).

Here, we need to keep in mind some important teachings that Jesus gives us as we engage in spreading the gospel. Among these crucial lessons, first, we must completely believe and rely on God. We should trust that the Lord will supply and fulfill our needs. Additionally, we are instructed to seek out the worthy person among those we encounter, as commanded by the Lord. We need to find individuals who welcome us and have open hearts regarding the gospel we proclaim. Of course, we must also believe that such individuals have been prepared by the Lord in advance. Once we find such a person, we have the responsibility to handle the task of seeking and recognizing them with faith. After finding them, we should enter their homes, following the Lord's command, and pray for peace.

The third saying of Jesus is, "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."

Look at Matthew 10:16 - "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." In order to triumph in spiritual warfare, we need wisdom. This wisdom involves coming with the cunning of serpents. Why should we come with the cunning of serpents? The reason is that although we are sent into this world as sheep, there are many false prophets who wear sheep's clothing on the outside but are actually ravenous wolves on the inside (7:15; 10:16). To succeed in spiritual warfare according to the words of the Lord, we must come with the cunning of serpents. What does it mean to come with the cunning of serpents? There are two interesting interpretations:

(1) First interpretation:

The content related to the serpent carries a highly negative connotation for us. It doesn't feel good, and when we look at Genesis 3:1, the serpent appears in a cunning and deceitful manner. However, the serpent is not only deceitful but also a symbol of wisdom. Therefore, the Egyptians represented the serpent as a symbol of wisdom in their hieroglyphs. When the Lord speaks of the wisdom of the serpent, He is emphasizing that,

above all, the serpent deals with various difficulties that come its way with caution, avoiding the troubles it faces. Among animals, the serpent is said to be the best at understanding and swiftly avoiding difficulties that come its way through quick and technical evasion. Thus, the Lord is instructing disciples to exercise wisdom, discernment, and vigilance in the face of threats, opposition, and intimidation from those who seek to hinder the gospel of Christ in a world that targets their lives. He is advising them to possess the power of prudent wisdom to anticipate and avoid anyone plotting harm or intending to harm the kingdom of God, its people, and the church. The wisdom of the serpent, in this context, means exercising careful discernment. The wisdom of the serpent implies the ability to discern and judge all matters. Such serpent-like wisdom advises us not to react impulsively to impending challenges but to apply wisdom, navigate through them, and accomplish what needs to be done, considering the potential consequences (Internet).

(2) Second interpretation:

When Jesus spoke of sending out your disciples to various towns, His words were, "be wise as serpents." In the symbolic meaning of the Jews, this can be summarized as 'speak wisely.' In the symbolic context of the Jews, the serpent is connected with 'wisdom,' and the reason for this association is the split tongue. While all other animals have one tongue, the serpent has two. From the perspective of the ancient people, the 'tongue' as a bodily organ enables one to speak well, and having two tongues instead of one was seen as a way to speak more effectively. Speaking well was considered synonymous with being wise. The Pharisees and scribes were known for quoting the Torah and speaking wisely, but their words were compared to deadly poison. In contrast, disciples should speak words that bring life, not words filled with lethal venom. The emphasis is on speaking wisely as a serpent that brings life, testifying to the gospel that points to Jesus Christ (Internet).

I believe both interpretations make sense. The key point here is that as Christians, while spreading the gospel and living a worthy life of the gospel in this world, we must speak and act wisely. Wisdom is essential.

Let's take a look at the latter part of Matthew 10:16 where Jesus says, "be innocent as doves." What does this phrase mean? Personally, when I think of "dove," the prophet Jonah from the Old Testament comes to mind. The reason is that the name "Jonah" means "dove." Moreover, the meaning of the name "Jonah" includes "foolish, insensitive, lack of discernment" (senseless). In Matthew 10:16, Jesus sends out the twelve disciples and tells them, "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Here, "innocent" in "innocent as doves" translates to the Greek word that literally means "unmixed, pure" (Walvoord). This word appears only twice in the New Testament, aside from today's passage: Romans 16:19 and Philippians 2:15.

(1) The first scripture is Romans 16:19: "For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil."

In Matthew 10:16, "innocent" is translated as 'harmless' in Romans 16:19. When the Apostle Paul told the

saints in the Roman church to "be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil," considering today's passage, it can be understood as "be innocent as doves" meaning "innocent as to what is evil." Paul desired the saints in Rome to be wise in doing good and harmless in avoiding evil (Rom. 16:19). Additionally, when Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, we see that he wished the Corinthian saints to be like infants in evil but mature in understanding (1 Cor. 14:20). Thus, he prayed to God for them, saying, "we pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed" (2 Cor. 13:7). Paul prayed to God that the Corinthian saints would not engage in any evil, desiring them to do what is right even if it meant he appeared as one rejected.

(2) The second scripture is Philippians 2:15: "that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."

Here, "innocent" is translated as 'blameless.' When I think of the term 'blameless,' I am reminded of the character Job from the Old Testament. The reason is that the Bible describes Job as a person who is "blameless, upright, fears God, and turns away from evil" (Job 1:1). God also spoke to Satan about Job, saying, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" (v. 8). Considering these two passages, "be innocent as doves" seems to convey the idea of 'turn away from evil, be blameless.' How can one be blameless and turn away from evil? It is when, like Job, we fear God, for the fear of God makes us hate evil (Prov. 8:13). Paul instructed the Thessalonian church saints, saying, "Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:22-23). This is precisely what it means to obey the command "be innocent as doves."

Jesus told his twelve disciples to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" because he knew that false teachers would persecute his disciples. Look at today's passage, Matthew 10:17-18: "Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles." Therefore, Jesus told his disciples to "beware of men," to be wise like serpents in dealing with people. Otherwise, Jesus knew that these people would hand his disciples over to the courts and flog them in the synagogues. Not only that, Jesus knew that his disciples would be brought before governors and kings for his sake. Yet, Jesus told them not to be anxious because the Holy Spirit within them would provide the words to speak as a testimony to the governors, kings, and the Gentiles (vv. 18-20). We, too, should not be anxious, just as Jesus instructed. Even if we strive to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, facing unexpected difficulties, challenges, and even crises, we should not be anxious. The reason is that God will enable us to bear witness to unbelievers. We should not worry about what to say in front of them. The reason is that the Holy Spirit dwelling within us will speak and give us the words to say.

The Lord has sent us into this world. The Lord has sent us to the lost sheep. The Lord has sent us to proclaim

the gospel of Jesus Christ to our homes, workplaces, and neighbors. Therefore, we must obey the Lord's command and go. We need to go and proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is near, just as the Lord commanded us. And we need to proclaim to the lost souls to believe in Jesus Christ, assuring them that they and their households will be saved. We need to find those who are open to our message, and when we enter their homes, we should pray for peace. This world has many false pastors and false teachers. We must be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, just as Jesus instructed. I pray that we all become such individuals.

Do Not be Afraid.

[Matthew 10:24-33]

Renowned as a genius scientist, Albert Einstein is believed to have said during his lifetime, 'I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots' (Internet). Einstein's fear seems to be related to concerns about the advancement of science and technology. I believe that the day he feared has already arrived. Just last week, while dining at a restaurant with my wife, I noticed a family sitting at a nearby table. It seemed to be a mother and her two children, but I observed that the children, while having their meal, were engrossed in their smartphones, not engaging in any conversation with each other. The progress of science and technology has brought numerous benefits to our lives, making them more convenient and, in some ways, happier. From this perspective, one could argue that the ultimate goal of science is to provide people with the comfortable and happy life they desire. However, along with these advantages, there are also disadvantages to the development of science and technology. These drawbacks include ethical issues arising from biotechnology, problems related to population growth due to prosperous living, environmental pollution, and the harm inflicted upon people by advanced weapons created through scientific technology (Internet). I also believe that the advancement of medical technology falls into a similar category. While medical technology has made overcoming diseases like cancer possible, with over 50% of people showing a survival rate of more than five years, the fear of cancer remains high among the public. The reasons for this fear, according to an internet article, are twofold. First, despite the significant improvement in treatment and survival rates due to medical technology, the cost of medical care remains high. Second, after being diagnosed with cancer, approximately 80% of individuals end up unemployed due to the need for treatment (Internet). Therefore, based on a survey conducted by the Korean National Cancer Center, 76.5% of respondents expressed significant concern over the financial burden of cancer treatment, and 13.7% indicated that they would entirely forgo hospital visits due to cost concerns. While the death rate due to cancer is 16.1%, the fear of treatment costs is reported to be 30.7% (Internet). What are you afraid of?

In today's passage from Matthew 10:26, 28, and 31, Jesus repeatedly tells his twelve disciples not to be afraid. Focusing on the theme of "Do Not be Afraid," I would like to meditate on Matthew 10:24-33, seeking the lessons God

imparts to us all.

First, the object of fear that we need to consider is who we should not be afraid of.

Look at Matthew 10:26 - "So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known." Here, Jesus tells his disciples not to be afraid of "them." Who are they? We can think of three possibilities:

(1) The "they" that Jesus is referring to are those who insulted Jesus as "Beelzebul."

Look at Matthew 10:25 - "It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!" Here, "Beelzebul" means "the prince of demons" (9:34; 12:24). So, who referred to Jesus as "the prince of demons"? Look at Matthew 9:34 and 12:24: "But the Pharisees said, 'It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons,'" "But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, 'It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.'" Hearing the news that Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute (12:22), the Pharisees called Jesus "the prince of demons Beelzebul" (v. 24). Therefore, Jesus tells his twelve disciples not to be afraid of these Pharisees. Why did Jesus say this to his disciples? The reason is that he knew the Pharisees had persecuted him and expected that they would persecute his disciples as well. So, in Matthew 10:24, Jesus says, "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master." The meaning of this statement is that if Jesus, as the teacher, experienced persecution, those who become his disciples cannot avoid persecution (Park). Therefore, in John 15:20, Jesus said, "Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."

If you read through today's passage, starting from Matthew 10:1, you will see that Jesus called his twelve disciples (v. 1), gave them instructions (vv. 2-15), and spoke about them receiving hatred and persecution (vv. 16-23). Regarding this persecution, Jesus provided more specific details from verse 17 onwards. First, Jesus mentioned that people would deliver His disciples to councils and flog them in their synagogues (v. 17). This prophecy was fulfilled when the apostles, leaders of the early church, were arrested by the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jews, and questioned (Acts 5:27). Moreover, in accordance with the Jewish customs of the time, there were incidents where those who violated religious laws were disciplined in synagogues with corporal punishment. The apostles faced persecution from the Jews in this way (v. 40) (Park). In reality, those who persecuted Jesus the most during His time were members of the council, including priests, scribes, elders, Pharisees, and Sadducees (Internet). Jesus was indicating that these religious leaders, who persecuted Him, would also persecute His disciples. Not only this persecution but also, in Matthew 10:21, Jesus prophesied about the persecution His disciples would face: "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death." What does this prophetic statement mean? It implies that close family members will betray those who believe in Jesus, leading to persecution. In reality, we can witness how this prophecy is being fulfilled even today.

How many brothers and sisters who believe in Jesus are facing hatred and persecution from their own families? Indeed, we see brothers betraying brothers, fathers betraying their children, and children rebelling against their parents because of faith in Jesus.

(2) When Jesus mentioned "they," He was referring to all those who hate Him.

Look at Matthew 10:22 - "And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." The Bible is telling us that if we believe in Jesus, we will be hated by all those who hate Him. Why do all these people hate Jesus and those of us who believe in Him? Look at John 15:19 - "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." The reason the world hates us is that we do not belong to the world but to the Lord. Therefore, when Jesus said, "Do not be afraid of them," He referred not only to the Pharisees but to everyone who hates Jesus.

(3) When Jesus mentioned "they," He referred to those who "can kill the body but cannot kill the soul."

Look at Matthew 10:28a - "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." Since Jesus Himself experienced hatred and persecution, knowing that His disciples would face the same, even to the point of death, He assured them not to fear. Therefore, when Jesus spoke about enduring hatred and persecution for His sake, even unto death, He emphasized the importance of not being afraid.

Believing in Jesus and spreading His gospel will inevitably lead to persecution. Those who hate Jesus will persecute us, even to the extent of taking our physical lives. Nevertheless, as Jesus instructed, we should not be afraid of them.

Second, let's consider why we should not be afraid.

Why should we not be afraid? Why should we not fear those who hate Jesus and oppose the gospel, all those who persecute us? The reason is clearly stated by Jesus in today's passage, Matthew 10:29-31: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." The reason we should not fear persecutors is that our Father in heaven esteems us highly. He values us to the extent that not even a sparrow, sold for a meager amount, falls to the ground without His knowledge (Lk. 12:6). He takes care of and oversees the life and death of every sparrow, and how much more does He care for and value us, disciples of Jesus, who are far more precious than many sparrows (Mt. 10:31, Lk. 12:7)? Moreover, in Matthew 10:30, Jesus indicates that our Father in heaven even knows the number of hairs on our heads, demonstrating His delicate and intimate love for us. With such deep love and care, the Lord assures His disciples by saying, "And even the hairs of your head are all numbered" (v. 30). In

light of this love and careful attention, Jesus continues to encourage His disciples, stating in Luke 21:17-18, "But not a hair of your head will perish." Even though we may face hatred from everyone because of Jesus' name, our Lord promises that not a hair on our heads will be harmed. Therefore, considering the profound love and watchful care our Lord has for us, even in the face of persecution and hatred, we should not be afraid of those who oppose Jesus and despise us.

If we believe in Jesus, persecution is inevitable. As we go out into the world, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and striving to live a life worthy of the gospel, we will undoubtedly face persecution. People of the world will hate us, and even our unbelieving family members may harbor animosity. Nevertheless, we should not be afraid. We should not fear those who hate Jesus and those who hate us as Christians. The reason is that God esteems us highly. The reason is that God values us as precious and noble and loves us (Isa. 43:4). God says to us, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (v. 1). "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (41:10). Do not be afraid, for God is with us. The God who loves us to the extent of giving His only begotten Son on the cross until our redemption assures us that He values and esteems us. This God will undoubtedly strengthen us and help us. God will hold us securely with His mighty right hand. Instead, we should fear only the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Mt. 10:28). We should fear the One whom we should rightly fear (Lk. 12:5). We should fear the God who has the power to destroy not only our bodies but also our souls in hell. Instead of fearing those who hate and persecute us, let us fear God. In the midst of such circumstances, even before those who hate and persecute us, we must confess Jesus. We should not be afraid even before persecutors who may try to harm us physically. We should confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior in faith. At that time, Jesus will acknowledge us before His heavenly Father (Mt. 10:32). However, if we deny Jesus before those who hate and persecute us, Jesus will deny us before His heavenly Father (v. 33).

1. Fear not, little flock, from the cross to the throne, From death in to life He went for His own; All power in earth, all power above, Is given to Him for the flock of His love.
2. Fear not, little flock, He go-eth ahead, Your Shepherd selecteth the path you must tread; The waters of Ma-rah He'll sweeten for thee, He drank all the bitter in Gethsemane.
3. Fear not, little flock, whatever your lot, He enters all rooms, "the doors being shut;" He never forsakes, He never is gone, So count on His presence in darkness and dawn.

(Chorus)

Only believe, only believe; All things are possible, only believe;

Only believe, only believe; All things are possible, only believe.

["Fear not, little flock"]

“I will give you rest”

[Matthew 11:25-30]

French scientist and mathematician known as Blaise Pascal reportedly said: ‘All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone’ (Internet). ‘Rest is absolutely essential for those living in our fast-paced modern society. In a culture where work and productivity dominate life, and an individual's worth is often evaluated based on productivity or achievements, interrupting labor for rest is not an easy task. However, for the sake of the quality of life, a decisive commitment to rest is necessary, putting an end to the perpetual cycle of efforts for continuous productivity. To overcome the constant positive and negative challenges and temptations of life, such as strategy, planning, worry, tension, effort, desire, violence, immorality, pleasure, bold resting is necessary. Spiritual rest, intellectual rest, emotional rest, physical rest, and social rest are absolutely essential’ (Internet). ‘Rest is a principle of the order of creation. After creating the world for six days, God rested. And He desires humans to join in that rest. The Sabbath is a day to cease the cruel struggles waged for survival. It is a day to stop all conflict and enjoy the peace of Shalom. It is a day for God and people, people and people, people and nature to enjoy peace together. It is a day to be liberated from all worries, fears, and anxieties and enjoy inner peace. It is a day for the tired soul to gain strength through God's word like refreshing water and for the weary body to recover through rest. It is a day to gain independence from the ultimate idol, money, to escape tension, and to taste eternal rest from the weary world. It is a day to break free from the bondage of plans and time, to reflect on oneself, to obtain rest from labor and to distance oneself from the impure. It is a day to entrust oneself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, stepping out of formal obligations, not worshipping the idols of technological civilization, not becoming a slave to profit, and opening one's eyes of love toward neighbors. It is a day to restore true repentance and peace through worship, rising with joy and hope’ (Internet).

This day is the Sabbath, the day in which we find rest in the Lord. This Sabbath is the day of rest for us in the Lord. On this Sabbath, Jesus, who is the Lord of this day, says in today's passage, Matthew 11:28: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Today, under the title "I will give you rest," I want to meditate on today's passage in three aspects, focusing on the grace that the Lord gives us.

Firstly, let's consider what Jesus meant when He said, "I will give you rest," and who the "you" refers to.

Here, Jesus explains who "you" are in three ways:

(1) "You" are "infants."

Look at Matthew 11:25: "At that time Jesus said, 'I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.'" The term "infants" is translated from the Greek word "νηπίοις" (nēpiois), which means childlike, innocent, or simple people (Friberg). These childlike, innocent people, mentioned by Jesus in verse 25, contrast with the "wise and intelligent" spoken of by Jesus. In other words, when Jesus promises the comforting words, "I will give you rest," He is inviting those who are not wise and intelligent by the world's standards but are like innocent children. It brings to mind 1 Corinthians 1:21, which states, "For since in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." This passage clearly states that the wisdom of this world cannot lead to the knowledge of God. Therefore, when Jesus says, "I will give you rest," He is not addressing those considered wise and intelligent by worldly standards. Instead, Jesus is inviting those who, from the world's perspective, are saved by the message that the world deems foolish (1 Cor. 1:21). These believers are the childlike, innocent people who have experienced the Lord's graciousness (v. 25). And these believers are like innocent and simple people. To them, Jesus said, "I will give you rest." So, who are these innocent and simple people? They are like newborn infants seeking pure, spiritual milk (1 Pet. 2:2). In other words, they are individuals who long for the uncontaminated, pure Word of God, specifically the gospel of Jesus Christ, and believe in Jesus (His death and resurrection). These believers are the ones who have experienced the Lord's kindness (v. 3). Therefore, these individuals confess and dedicate themselves, declaring, "Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You" (Ps. 63:3). To such people, Jesus affirms, "I will give you rest."

(2) "You" refers to those who have received revelation.

Look at Matthew 11:27 - "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Here, the "ones to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" are those who know God the Father (v. 27). So, how did they come to know God the Father? It is because, according to the will of Jesus, the Son of God, they received revelation. What does it mean to have received revelation? Refer to Matthew 10:26: "So do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known." In other words, the gospel, which was previously unknown to the

world, has now been revealed and proclaimed according to God's determined will or by His power (Park). Therefore, when thinking about those who "have received revelation," based on Matthew 10:26, they are the ones who have become aware of hidden things as the concealed truth is unveiled, namely, those who have heard and believed in the proclaimed gospel of Jesus. They are the ones who believe in Jesus, embracing the pure gospel of Christ, like innocent infants (11:25). Among these "receivers of revelation," one notable figure is the apostle Peter. Look at Matthew 16:17 - "Jesus said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.'" The context of this statement is when Jesus asked His disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" (v. 15). Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). At that moment, Jesus said to Peter, "Blessed are you" and clarified that the Father in heaven had revealed this truth to him (v. 17). In summary, when Jesus said in today's passage, "I will give you rest," the "you" are those who, by the will of God, confess Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus promises rest to those who, through God's revelation, believe in Him.

(3) "You" refers to those who are weary and burdened.

Look at Matthew 11:28 - "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Here, when Jesus speaks of those who are "weary and burdened," He is referring to those who bear the burden of their sins and the consequences of those sins (Walvoord). Regarding those carrying such burdens, Dr. Yoon-seon Park stated, 'The condition of bearing such heavy burdens is like that of a prisoner confined in prison, unable to be free and carrying a heavy load. This person is one who has received condemnation in everything he does' (Park). While we may have many burdens of worries and concerns during our time on this earth, among them, the heaviest burden that weighs on our hearts is the burden of sin. When we violate God's commands, act according to our own desires, and engage in disobedience, our hearts inevitably become heavy with the burden of sin. Psalms 38:4 captures this sentiment, where the psalmist confesses, "My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear." The lyrics of the hymn "I Must Tell Jesus," also come to mind: (v. 1) I must tell Jesus all of my trials, I cannot bear these burdens alone; In my distress He kindly will help me, He ever loves and cares for His own. (v. 2) I must tell Jesus all of my troubles, He is a kind, compassion-ate Friend; If I but ask Him, He will deliver, Make of my troubles quickly and end. (v. 3) Tempted and tried I need a great Savior, One who can help my burdens to bear; I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus, He all my cares and sorrows will share. (Chorus) I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! I cannot bear my burdens alone; I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus! Jesus can help me, Jesus alone. When all our trials, the heavy burdens of our hearts, and the terrifying sins we face cause the load on our hearts to become increasingly heavy, there are times when we bear that burden alone and cannot endure, leading to a collapse. Therefore, in Psalms 38:4, the psalmist confesses, "My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear." Can you sense the pressure of sin in the cry of the psalmist?

Second, what we want to consider is when Jesus said, "I will give you rest," who is

the "I" here?

Who is it that promised to come to those who are like children, those who have received revelation, and those who are weary and burdened, saying, "Come to me, and I will give you rest"? Of course, as we already know, the "I" here is none other than Jesus. Then, in today's passage, who does Jesus say He is? He mentions it in three ways.

(1) Jesus is one who gives thanks to God the Father.

Look at Matthew 11:25 - "At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.'" Jesus praises God the Father because He has hidden the wisdom of the kingdom from the wise and learned of the world and revealed it to those who are like little children. He gives thanks to the Father for this. Jesus, filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, thanked God (Lk. 10:21). What made Jesus so joyfully thankful to the point of being filled with the Holy Spirit? The reason is that God the Father revealed Himself to those who received revelation according to the will of the Son, Jesus (Mt. 11:27). Reflecting on this gratitude of Jesus, I thought of the words in the first half of John 11:41-42. When Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus, who had died, He prayed in this way: "Take away the stone," and then, looking up to heaven, He said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me." The reason Jesus thanked God the Father was that He always heard the words of the Son, Jesus. With assurance of the answer to that prayer and calling Lazarus with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" he came back to life (Jn. 11:43-44). Not only that, but looking at the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish in John 6, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks to God, and then distributed it (6:11-12). After giving thanks, Jesus divided the bread and fish, and more than 5,000 men were satisfied (vv. 11-12). In addition, in the story of the feeding of the 4,000 in Mark 8, Jesus took the seven loaves, gave thanks, and broke them before distributing them to the crowd (Mk. 8:6-8). By doing so, Jesus multiplied the loaves, and a large crowd was fed (vv. 6-8). In the same way, giving thanks to God, who is the source of life, Jesus, who became the living Word, preached the words of life. At that time, the wise and learned of the world rejected his words (for example, religious leaders), but those who received revelation according to the will of the Son, Jesus, accepted the words of life. Therefore, Jesus thanked God the Father (Mt. 11:25). In this way, Jesus, who gave thanks to God the Father, says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

(2) Jesus is the one who said "yes" and obeyed the will of God the Father.

In today's passage, Matthew 11:26 states, "Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do." Jesus believed that hiding things from the wise and revealing them to little children was the good will of God the Father. In other words, Jesus knew that it was the Father's will to hide Himself and His gospel from

those who considered themselves wise in the eyes of the world and to reveal it to humble ones who, like infants, long for pure spiritual milk. Jesus earnestly desired that the Father's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. To what extent did Jesus desire the Father's will? He prayed on the night before His crucifixion on the Mount of Olives, saying, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done" (26:39). Jesus, obedient to the will of God the Father, lowered Himself and died on the cross, praying, "Yet not as I will, but as you will" (v. 39). Why did Jesus, the only begotten Son, obey the will of God the Father to the point of dying on the cross? The reason is that God the Father desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, Jesus, in obedience to the Father's will, died on the cross to bear our sins, offering salvation to all people. In this context, the term "everyone" refers to those who, like children (Mt. 11:25), long for the gospel of Jesus Christ and believe in Jesus according to the will of God the Father (v. 27). These are not merely those who call Jesus "Lord, Lord" but those who do the will of the Father in heaven (7:21; see also 12:50). Who are those who do the will of God the Father? It is those who believe in Jesus, whom God sent to this earth, as the work and will of God (Jn. 6:30). Jesus, the one who said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28), is the fulfillment of God the Father's will.

(3) Jesus is gentle and humble in heart.

Look at Matthew 11:29 - "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." The heart of Jesus, who said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (v. 28), is gentle and humble. He is gentle and humble in the context of saving us, emptying Himself, and obeying until death (Phil. 2:8) (Park). In other words, Jesus' gentleness and humility involve lowering Himself and obeying the Father's will to the point of death on the cross, taking on the form of a servant, becoming like human beings, and humbling Himself (Phil. 2:7-8), all for our salvation. This is what Jesus desired, namely, to humble Himself and die on the cross for our salvation. In today's passage, Matthew 11:27, those who have received the revelation according to the will of the Son, Jesus Christ, confess that they know God the Father. Do you know what Jesus' desire is? Jesus' desire was to die on the cross for the sins of you and me who received the revelation. Today's passage says, "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt. 11:27). Jesus' desire was to die on the cross for our salvation. Therefore, God forgave all our sins and saved us. This is the gentle and humble heart of our Lord. The heart of our Lord is to obey the Father's will until death, saving you and me. Our salvation is the earnest desire of Jesus, who is gentle and humble. Jesus speaks to us today: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (v. 28).

Third and the last point is that Jesus said, "I will give you rest" (v. 28).

What does "give you rest" mean in this context? Here, when Jesus says, "I will give you rest," it refers to the rest of the heart, as mentioned in the latter part of Matthew 11:29, where Jesus says, "and you will find rest for your souls." The rest of the heart in this context signifies the rest of the soul. Why did Jesus mention the rest of the soul? Why did Jesus say, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (v. 28)? The reason is that Jesus desires to give us rest for our souls from the heavy burden of sin. In other words, the promise Jesus is making with the rest of the soul is to liberate us from the heavy burden of sin. As we have already contemplated, the psalmist in Psalms 38:4 confesses, "My iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me." In the cry of the psalmist, we feel the oppression of sin. Sin presses down on our souls to such an extent that it becomes a heavy burden. Therefore, our souls inevitably bear a heavy burden. Not only the psalmist but also the Apostle Paul said, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). However, in the next verse, Paul says, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v. 25). Why did Paul give thanks? Why did the Apostle Paul thank God? The reason is stated in Romans 8:1-2: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." The reason is that Paul, through Jesus Christ, was set free from the law of sin and death. In other words, he obtained freedom from sin and the eternal death that results from it, and that is why he thanked God. This brings to mind the hymn "Would You be Free You're your Buden of Sin": (v. 1) Would you be free from your burden of sin? There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood. Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonderful pow'r in the Blood. (v. 2) Would you be free from your passion and pride? There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood. Come for a cleansing to Calvary's tide. There's wonderful pow'r in the Blood. (v. 3) Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood. Sin stains are lost in its life-giving flow. There's wonderful pow'r in the Blood. (v. 4) Would you do service for Jesus your King? There's pow'r in the Blood, pow'r in the Blood. Would you live daily His praises to sing? There's wonderful pow'r in the Blood. (Chorus) There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder-working pow'r In the blood of the Lamb. There is pow'r pow'r wonder-working pow'r In the precious blood of the Lamb.

The scene of cows wearing yokes and plowing fields in the Middle East is said to be very interesting (Internet). The yoke is actually hung only around the mother cow's neck, and the calf is simply guided with its neck inserted into the yoke. Since the mother cow is the only one wearing the yoke, it has no choice but to plow the field with difficulty. However, the calf just needs to follow along. Perhaps the calf might think, 'This yoke is so easy and light, why is Mom sweating so much for nothing?' To onlookers, it may appear that the calf is carrying the heavy yoke along with the mother cow. However, in reality, the mother cow wears the yoke alone, and the calf simply follows. Similarly, gentle and humble Jesus instructs us to take up His yoke and learn from Him. He promises to be a companion to those who obediently carry the yoke with Him. We are like the young calf, just needing to follow. The heavy burden is carried by Jesus. In times of difficulty and hardship, we must remember Jesus' words, urging us to bear the yoke with Him, and simply follow when it feels burdensome. Jesus says to us, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). May the Lord grant you true rest.

Seed Sown on Good Soil

[Matthew 13:1-9]

Do you know Nelson Mandela, the former president of South Africa, who passed away several years ago? Mandela, the first black president elected after the implementation of equal elections in South Africa, fought against racial discrimination under the old white regime and was arrested on charges of treason, receiving a life sentence. However, he was released on February 11, 1990, after spending 27 years in prison. During his imprisonment, Mandela's daughter once brought his grandchild to visit him. At that time, Mandela named his granddaughter 'Hope' and said, 'You are hope. Hope has never left me during my time in prison, and it will not leave me in the future' (Internet). What does this tell us about him? Doesn't it indicate that Nelson Mandela had the seed of hope planted in his heart? Do you also have the seed of hope in your heart? In my heart, the seed of hope that the Lord has planted is the promise of God's Word. Personally, it is John 6:1-15 (the feeding of the five thousand), and corporately, it is Matthew 16:18 ('I will build my church'). The Lord, who became the farmer, has sown these seeds of His Word on the tablet of my heart. And the Lord makes these seeds sprout, grow, and bear fruit. And when the time comes, in the Lord's timing, I pray and eagerly await that these seeds will yield much fruit.

In today's passage, Matthew 13:1-9, Jesus presents the parable of sowing seeds. Addressing the large crowds gathered around Him (v. 2), Jesus explains that the seed was sown on four types of soil: "along the path," "on rocky ground," "among thorns," and "on good soil." Jesus emphasizes that the seed sown on the good soil yields fruit ("produces a crop") (v. 8). Here, the "seed" represents "the word of God" (Lk. 8:11), and the "sower" is "the Son of Man," that is, "Jesus Christ." Today, I would like to meditate on the four types of soil under the title "Seed Sown on Good Soil," focusing on the lessons that the Lord imparts to us.

First, it's the seed sown along the path.

Look at Matthew 13:3-4: "Then he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.'" What does this

parable mean? Jesus explains the meaning of this parable in Matthew 13:19 - "When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path." In other words, the one on whom the seed falls along the path is the one who hears the message about the kingdom of God, the word of God, but does not comprehend it. Then, the evil one, Satan, comes and snatches away the sown word from their heart. Why does Satan, the adversary, snatch away the word of God sown in our hearts? Look at Luke 8:12 - "Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts so that they may not believe and be saved." Satan tries to prevent us from believing and being saved by taking away the word of God from our hearts. What does the term "evil one" refer to? Mark 4:15 says "Satan," and Luke 8:12 mentions the "devil." Why does Satan, the devil, take away the word of God sown in our hearts? Luke 8:12 explains: "Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts so that they may not believe and be saved." Satan wants to prevent us from believing in Jesus for salvation. The condition of being "along the path" represents a heart open to all the evil movements and influences in the world. Such a heart has no intention of receiving the word of God with obedience. It is a significant spiritual ailment. In other words, a heart like the path fails to comprehend the word of God because there is no attitude of obedience. To put it differently, due to the disobedient attitude, the word of God is not understood. Proverbs 22:17-29 provided a teaching centered on the theme "Listen obediently to the words of the wise." One of the lessons learned was to incline our ears to listen obediently to the words of the wise (Harris). If we listen to the word of God with an attitude of disobedience, not with a humble and obedient attitude, Satan will snatch away the seed of that word. Not only will Satan take away the seed, but our hearts will become hardened, leading us to reject God, persistently disobey His word, and live proudly. Consequently, our hearts will become more obstinate, unwilling to listen to any admonition or correction in love.

In order not to let Satan snatch away the word we hear from God, we must approach God's word with an obedient attitude. When we listen to God's word with an obedient attitude, we will comprehend that word. Having understood the word, we need to practically obey it. When we obey the word and store it in our hearts (Prov. 22:18), we will be able to trust God more (v. 19). As we continue to obey God's word and make it our own possession (Ps. 119:56), our faith will inevitably grow. However, if we listen to God's word with a disobedient attitude, not only will we fail to comprehend it, but our faith will not grow. Instead, our faith will become weaker over time, leading to increasing doubt in God and eventually living a life of disobedience to His commandments. This is precisely the life of the seed sown along the path.

Second, it is the seed sown on rocky ground.

Look at Matthew 13:5 - "Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil." What does this parable mean? Jesus explained the meaning of this parable in Matthew 13:20-21: "As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away." In Modern Korean Bible, it can be expressed as: "The seed sown on rocky ground represents someone who hears the word, joyfully accepts it at once, but does not

hold it deep in his heart. He endures for a while, but when trouble or persecution arises because of the word, he quickly falls away." In other words, the one on rocky ground is someone who hears God's word, immediately receives it with joy, but lacks depth, so when difficulties or persecution arise due to the word, he quickly stumbles. Despite receiving God's word with joy, this person lacks deep-rooted faith. Nevertheless, unlike the seed sown along the path, the one on rocky ground receives God's word with joy, indicating some level of faith. However, the problem lies in the fact that this faith does not last long. The trials and persecution that come because of the word quickly cause this person to stumble and, in some instances, even to fall away or betray their faith (Lk. 8:13). The key issue here is the lack of depth—there is no root. The shallow faith of this person prevents them from enduring trials and tribulations. Their faith is temporary, and they fall away when faced with challenges. This illustrates the image of faith without deep roots.

When meditating on this passage, I was reminded of Pastor Jun-min Kang's book titled 'Deep Rooted Spirituality.' In that book, the author describes "spirituality" as becoming more like Jesus Christ, receiving the Spirit of Jesus. In other words, it is becoming like Jesus through the Word within the Holy Spirit (Kang). In the context of deep-rooted spirituality, the interesting point the author mentioned is that deep-rooted spirituality means growing downward first. It is akin to the roots of a tree growing beneath the soil. The author summarized this concept in four points:

(1) A spirituality that values the small:

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It is about valuing small things. While the world places value on achievements, success, and outcomes, the kingdom of God values 'being.' The characteristics of the kingdom of God are to value the worth of the soul, like that of a child who is innocent and dependent on God. The kingdom of God places value on the essence of the soul.

(2) A humble spirituality that humbles oneself:

Look at Philippians 2:7-8: "But made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

(3) A spirituality that hides oneself:

The roots do not expose themselves. It is crucial to deeply bury the roots.

(4) A spirituality that cares for the unseen inner person:

Look at Ephesians 3:16 – "That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with

power through his Spirit in your inner being.”

When can the roots grow deep? It is during trials. God allows trials to happen. Moses experienced this in the wilderness for 40 years. Trees grow their roots only by resting during the winter. Winter is essential for trees. Sometimes God makes it very difficult, where you cannot do anything. John Bunyan went through such times. Hardship is a blessing. “I always tell myself, 'Do not waste suffering'" (Kang).

We must pursue a faith with deep roots. Despite any persecution or adversity in our faith, we should seek an unwavering belief with roots that do not move (Prov. 12:3). Look at Colossians 2:6-7: "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." To stand firm in faith and live a life overflowing with gratitude, we need to deeply root ourselves in Jesus Christ. We must make Jesus the foundation of our lives (1 Cor. 3:11). In doing so, we are to walk in Him, just like the believers in the Thessalonian church who, in the midst of many trials, received the joy of the Holy Spirit, became examples for other believers, and spread the news of their faith to all places (1 Thess. 1:6-8).

Third, it is the seed sown among thorns.

Look at Matthew 13:7 - "Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them." What is the meaning of this parable? Jesus explained the meaning in Matthew 13:22: "As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful." In other words, the one in whom the seed falls among thorns hears the word of God but is unable to bear fruit because the cares of the world, the lure of wealth, and various desires prevent living according to the word. The reasons for not living according to the word include worldly anxieties (worries) and temptations related to wealth (Mt. 13:22). Other desires (Mk. 4:19) and the allure of pleasure (Lk. 8:14) also contribute to the inability to live according to God's word. The environment of "thorns" takes away the nutrients that the good seed needs to absorb, preventing it from bearing fruit (Park). What does this mean? If our hearts are like thorns, we may hear the word of God, but our hearts are already occupied by the cares of the world, greed for wealth, and other desires and pleasures. Therefore, we cannot live according to the word, and our faith life fails to bear fruit. Indeed, if our hearts are captivated by worries, temptations of wealth, and desires and pleasures, even as we hear the word of God, how can we obey and live according to His word? Instead, we may become disobedient to God's word, falling into worries, temptations of wealth, and desires and pleasures, ultimately committing sins against God.

When thinking about an environment like thorns, I was reminded of the book ‘Hee-dae's Hope’ written by Dr. Hee-dae Lee, the director of the Cancer Center at Yonsei Severance Hospital, which I read a long time ago. Dr. Lee, a specialist in breast cancer, experienced 10 recurrences of cancer that had metastasized from the colon to the liver and bones, enduring the pain of surpassing life and death. In his book, there was a passage I remembered about why cancer cells are frightening. I looked it up on my personal blog and found the quote: ‘What makes cancer cells terrifying is the fact that, to constantly grow, they monopolize the nutrients of other cells by themselves. And not just in one place, they keep moving. Cancer cells tend to proliferate well when calorie intake is excessive. They lurk

quietly and suddenly seize high-calorie nutrients to feed on and grow. Just as cancer cells grow by devouring the nutrients of other cells, their origin lies in ceaseless greed. In other words, the essence of cancer cells is greed' (Hee-dae Lee). It seems that, just like these cancer cells, the worries of the world, temptations of wealth, and various desires and pleasures in our hearts deprive us of the nutrients of God's word. To put it more biblically, the worries of the world, temptations of wealth, and other desires and pleasures block the nutrients of God's word in our hearts, preventing us from living according to His word. In Matthew 13:22, Matthew says, "and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word," where the word "choke" in English means 'to suffocate, strangle,' or 'to constrict the throat, strangle to death.' Once we think about it this way, it might be easier to understand. Although we hear God's word with our ears and store it in our minds, the word is not descending into our hearts. The reason for this is something that is constricting our throats: the worries of the world, temptations of wealth, and other desires and pleasures in our hearts.

If there are worries of the world, temptations of wealth, and various desires and pleasures in our hearts, we must cast aside all these things. However, mere confession and repentance with our lips are not enough. The reason is that if we only confess with our lips, our hearts will remain blocked, and we will not be able to live according to God's word, no matter how much we hear it. To live according to God's word, we must completely discard the worries of the world, temptations of wealth, and other desires and pleasures in our hearts, similar to getting rid of cancer cells. By doing so, we can listen to God's word and live according to it.

Fourth and last, the seed sown on good soil.

Look at Matthew 13:8 - "Other seeds fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." What is the meaning of this parable? Jesus explained the meaning of the parable in Matthew 13:23 - "But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." In other words, the one on the good soil is the one who hears and understands God's word, producing a fruitful yield, be it a hundred, sixty, or thirty times. Luke 8:15 says: "But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." Here, the term "noble and good heart" uses two different words in the original Greek, but their meaning is akin to "good." However, there is a nuanced distinction between the two words. The second word, "good heart," points towards a morally upright and noble heart. On the other hand, the first word, "noble," also has a sense of "beautiful," encompassing meanings like 'healthy,' 'sound,' and 'fit' (Friberg). Considering these nuances, when we look at the translation of the first word as "fit," "suitable" in the Korean Revised Version and "beautiful" in the Modern Korean Bible, it seems appropriate. Therefore, we can understand that the heart described in Luke 8:15 is not only morally upright and noble but also beautiful, healthy, sound, and fit for receiving and retaining the word of God. The reason for distinguishing between these two words is to understand more accurately the heart of the one on whom the seed falls in good soil. This heart is both upright and healthy, fitting for receiving God's Word. Additionally, it is morally upright and noble, presenting a beautiful heart in the eyes of the Lord. When contemplating this heart, I am reminded of Acts 17:11 - "Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what

Paul said was true." The reason this verse comes to mind is that when thinking about the English translation of "a noble heart" in Luke 8:15, Acts 17:11 refers to the Bereans as being "more noble" or "more noble character" (depending on the translation) because they received the word with eagerness and diligently studied the Scriptures daily to confirm its truth. Reflecting on these two verses together, I gain a more enriched understanding of what a "good soil" heart, where the seed of God's Word is sown, entails. This heart is not only upright and healthy, fitting for receiving God's Word, but also morally upright and noble. The reason for this nobility is that the individual receives God's Word with an earnest heart and diligently studies the Scriptures daily to confirm its truth. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our hearts, yours and mine, could embody such characteristics?

When meditating on this passage, I was reminded of the Korean gospel song "A Little Spark" with the lyrics of the second verse: 'A nameless blade of grass stands before the Lord, asking for strength to endure the cold wind. Oh Lord, help it to stand. Like a fruitless barren tree, a sinner who failed to bloom, this life, spent in vain, falls prostrate before You. In times of sadness and anxiety, we hope for the heavenly kingdom and pray to live eternally in the Father's embrace. May we remain as a small blade of grass spreading the fragrance to the world, blooming and becoming a gardener.' Particularly, the phrase "a sinner who failed to bloom, like a fruitless barren tree" came to mind as I contemplated this passage. With a desire to become a believer who bears fruit, I aspire to meditate on this passage anew and bear fruits, like the seed sown in good soil in today's parable of Jesus, yielding a harvest of a hundred, sixty, or thirty times. Furthermore, I pray that all of us may cultivate a heart like good soil and become believers who bear fruit. To achieve this, our hearts need to be beautiful and fitting in the sight of God. A heart beautiful and fitting in God's eyes is a healthy and upright heart, pure and noble. Such a heart listens with an obedient attitude to God's Word. Moreover, a heart like good soil sends its roots deep into Jesus Christ within the Word of God. Therefore, regardless of any pain or adversity caused by the Word (faith), it remains unshaken, endures, and overcomes. Furthermore, a heart like good soil is not obstructed by the worries of the world, temptations of wealth, or other desires and pleasures. Instead, it listens to God's Word, keeps it, and bears fruit with patience. May all of us bear such fruit.

Harvest Time

[Matthew 13 :24-30]

When a farmer sows seeds in spring, what is on his mind? Surely, the farmer is thinking about the harvest in autumn and diligently sows the seeds in spring. The reason the farmer sows seeds in spring and works hard is precisely because he eagerly anticipates the fruits of the harvest (cf. Jam. 5:7) during the autumn harvest. In the Bible, there are several individuals mentioned as farmers: in the Old Testament's Genesis, Cain (4:2), Noah (9:20), and Isaac (26:12) are mentioned as farmers. Additionally, Boaz (Ruth 2:3-16) and Shagrai (Zech 13:5) were also farmers. While Shagrai is known as a prophet, he explicitly stated that he was a farmer by profession (v. 5). In the New Testament, in John 15, Jesus likened God to a farmer, saying, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser" (v. 1). Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 3:6, the God who becomes a farmer is described as the one who causes the church to grow: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."

Today, looking at the passage in Matthew 13:24-30, Jesus uses the analogy of 'wheat and tares' in front of his disciples. As he speaks of this analogy, he comes to verse 30 and instructs to let the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest. He is talking about the harvest time. Centering on this aspect of today's passage under the title "Harvest Time," I would like to meditate on the teachings that the Lord gives to our church.

First, let's consider what Jesus is talking about with the "wheat and tares."

Look at Matthew 13:24-26: "He put another parable before them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.'" In this parable, what Jesus is referring to as "wheat" is the "good seed" sown in the field (v. 24). Initially, it sprouts, then later produces stalks, and eventually yields the grain, which refers to the fruitful crop (kernel) (Mk. 4:28). Here, the good seed, as explained in Matthew 13:36-43, is sown in "the field," representing this world, by the Son of Man

(v. 37), who is Jesus himself. The good seed specifically represents the sons of the kingdom (v. 38). Who are the sons of the kingdom? They are the true believers, Christians, who, through the church, spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in this world. The seed of the gospel is planted in hearts like good soil, and these Christians live a life bearing fruit by believing in Jesus, not only obtaining eternal life (Jn. 3:16) but also having their citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20). These true believers have genuinely received the word of God in their hearts, resulting in a transformed life (Jam. 1:13, 1 Pet. 1:23). Transformed individuals live in Christ, for Christ, looking to Christ alone (Park).

So, who does the "tares" refer to? Look at Matthew 13:38 – "The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one." Here, Jesus states that the tares are the sons of the evil one. These sons of the evil one are individuals who, in contrast to the sons of the kingdom who receive the word of God in their hearts, listen to the words of the devil and obediently follow evil ways (Park). The reason for this distinction is that the enemy who sowed the tares in the field is none other than the devil (v. 39). Reflecting on this passage, I recalled Jesus' explanation of the parable of the sower, specifically the seed sown by the wayside, which we meditated on in Matthew 13:1-9. Look at Matthew 13:19 - "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path." Here, the evil one refers to Satan (Mk. 4:15) or the devil (Lk. 8:12), who purposefully snatches away the word of God sown in hearts like the wayside, with the aim of preventing them from believing in Jesus and obtaining salvation (v. 12). Based on this context, when thinking about Matthew 13:25, where Jesus speaks of the "tares," the sons of the evil one (v. 38) refer to those who do not believe in Jesus, individuals who have not received salvation, in other words, unbelievers. In today's passage, Jesus uses the parable to describe the tares as the sons of the evil one, who listen to the devil's words and obediently follow evil ways – they are unbelievers. In verse 41, Jesus provides additional clarification about these sons of the evil one: "The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers." This statement indicates that the tares, the sons of the evil one, are individuals who practice wrongdoing and engage in unlawful activities.

These sons of the evil one are false ones, and Satan has sown them within the church. These false individuals manifest their identity to some extent within the church. There are several characteristics of false individuals within the church: (1) They are not born again and, therefore, do not understand the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. (2) They do not truly hate sin and do not genuinely repent of their wrongdoing. (3) They love the world more than the kingdom and are inclined towards worldly pursuits. (4) Hypocrisy, cunning, and pride drive their way of life. (5) At times, they may outwardly advocate for truth and integrity, but their focus is not on God but on the world and the flesh (Park). These false individuals within the church receive false teachings, portraying themselves as outwardly righteous and good while, internally, engaging in contrary actions (Park). Such individuals, with a contradiction between their outward appearance and inward reality, are false believers within the church. These false believers mix with true believers. So, when and where does Jesus say the enemy, the devil, sowed this tare? "While everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat" (Mt. 13:25). Jesus states that the enemy, the devil, sowed the tares while everyone was sleeping, meaning discreetly, without people being aware. In other words, the enemy, the devil, secretly infiltrated the sons of the evil one among the sons of the kingdom, and this could imply that the devil subtly introduced false believers into the church without the true believers being aware (Park). This suggests

that Satan sows false believers within the church, infiltrating them discreetly, aiming to deceive true believers. Currently, Satan is clandestinely infiltrating false teachers into the church to mislead true believers with false doctrines. Jesus has already warned that false prophets will arise and deceive many (24:11). He prophesied that many would come in His name, claiming to be Christ, and deceive many (v. 5, Mk. 13:6). Look at Matthew 24:24 - "For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." Their purpose is to deceive true believers and lead their hearts away from the purity and truthfulness towards Christ (2 Cor. 11:3).

There are both wheat and tares in the church. In the church, there are true believers, but there are also false believers. Just as wheat and tares grow together in one field, currently, within the church, both true and false believers are growing. True believers receive God's word, obey, and, through faith, continue to grow, leading lives that are increasingly transformed to resemble Jesus. They manifest Jesus' gospel and fragrance while expanding God's kingdom on Earth, participating partially in the heavenly life. On the other hand, false believers, receiving the devil's words, grow in unbelief and disobedience to God's word. They, instead, obey Satan's words, not only within the church but also outside, contributing to more evil actions and furthering the worldly corruption. In the end, true and false believers will each strive to establish God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom more dominantly in this world. To which kingdom do you belong? Are you a true believer?

Second, let's consider why Jesus instructed to let the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest and contemplate the reason behind Jesus mentioning the "harvest time" and when this harvest time occurs.

Why did Jesus say to let the wheat and tares grow together until the harvest? In today's passage, observing the parable of the wheat and tares, we see a scene where the servants, seeing both the good seed they sowed in the field sprouting and bearing fruit, inquire of the master, "Did you not sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?" (v. 27). The master responds, "An enemy has done this" (v. 28). The servants then ask, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" (v. 28). What does the master say at that moment? Look at verses 29-30: "But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds, you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time, I will tell the reapers, 'Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" What is the significance of this parable? Why did the master instruct the servants not to pull up the weeds but let them grow together until the harvest? The meaning of this parable is that Jesus is instructing His servants, the angels, not to separate the false believers mixed with the true believers, but to leave them as they are. The reason is the concern that pulling up the weeds might also uproot the wheat. The meaning of this parable is that distinguishing between true and false believers within the church is not easy, and in the process of trying to separate false believers, there is a risk of unintentionally expelling potential true believers. The parable emphasizes the need to leave the judgment of true and false believers to the appointed time when only Jesus, as the judge, will have the authority to judge false believers. In summary, the message is that we are not in a position to judge who are the true believers and who are the false believers. Only the Lord has the authority to be the judge, and attempting to

cast out false believers from the church may result in a significant mistake, as there is a possibility of mistakenly excluding potential true believers. Therefore, Jesus instructs in the parable to let both the wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest, where the Lord will instruct the reapers to gather the tares first, bind them for burning, and gather the wheat into His barn.

Here, what does "harvest time" refer to? The harvest time is precisely the end of the age (v. 39), which signifies the time of Jesus' Second Coming, the final moment. On the day Jesus returns to this world, He will command His reapers, the angels (v. 39), to separate the wheat, the true sons of the kingdom, the children of God, and the citizens of the kingdom of heaven, from the tares, the sons of the evil one, the unbelievers, false ones, and those who practice lawlessness. He will do this separation (see: Mt. 25:32). The separation will be initiated by the angels, gathering unbelievers, false ones (false believers), and all those who practice lawlessness and evil, from among the true believers, the children of God, and the citizens of the kingdom of heaven. They will be cast into the unquenchable fire, the eternal fire of hell (verses 40-42). Look at verses 49-50: "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Thus, at the end of the age, during Jesus' Second Coming, it will be a day of judgment for the wicked, a day of eternal destruction. However, by God's grace, for true believers who have become righteous by believing in Jesus, it will not be a day of judgment but a day of salvation. Therefore, the true believers, the citizens of the kingdom of heaven, eagerly await the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the Savior from heaven (Phil 3:20). The reason is that on the day Jesus returns, the Lord will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body (v. 21).

The end of the world is undoubtedly drawing near. Surely, the last days are approaching, and the time of Jesus' Second Coming is near. At that time, the Lord will clearly distinguish between the wheat and the tares. The Lord will command His angels to gather the tares, the sons of the evil one, and cast them into the eternal fiery furnace of hell (Mt. 13:42). Then, the Lord will gather the wheat, the sons of the kingdom, and store them in His barn (v. 30). Just like a farmer wielding a sickle to harvest the wheat, in the last days, the Lord will come to this earth to harvest the wheat (Rev 14:14-16). During the harvest, the Lord will gather the sons of the kingdom into His barn, into the kingdom of His Father (Mt. 13:43). There, the righteous sons of the kingdom will shine like the sun (v. 43). With this hope in mind, what should you and I do? The Bible, in James 5:7-8, tells us: "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." I pray that you and I may be patient and steadfast as we await the coming of the Lord.

“Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

[Matthew 14:22-33]

On April 16, 2014, a maritime accident occurred in the waters near Jindo-gun, Jeollanam-do, South Korea, causing shock and sorrow among the entire Korean population. This incident has undoubtedly affected not only the citizens in Korea but also likely the Korean diaspora around the world. Upon reading an editorial/commentary titled ‘Wishing to be a Country where People can Live in Peace’ from Sejong Shinmun (April 26, 2014), I found myself resonating with the title. The desire for our homeland to become a place where people can live in peace is a shared sentiment among us. However, when reflecting on the reality, not just from this incident but also considering various accidents in the past, one might question whether Korea is indeed a country where people can live in peace.

Looking at major incidents since the 1990s, we find:

October 10, 1993: Sinking of the West Sea Ferry, resulting in 292 deaths.

October 21, 1994: Collapse of Seoul's Han River Seongsu Bridge, causing 32 deaths.

October 24, 1994: Chungju Lake cruise ship fire, leading to 30 deaths.

April 28, 1995: Gas explosion at the Daegu subway construction site, resulting in 101 deaths.

June 29, 1995: Collapse of Sampoong Department Store in Seoul, causing 502 deaths.

February 18, 2003: Arson attack in Daegu subway, resulting in 190 deaths.

February 17, 2014: Roof collapse at Mount Mauna Ocean Resort in Gyeongju, causing 10 deaths.

In addition to these incidents, particularly when considering the recurring news of child sexual crimes in Korea (recent cases like Cho Doo-soon, Kim Soo-chul), one may wonder if parents in Korea can send their young children to school without anxiety. According to statistics, ‘Sexual crimes against minors, which were 994 cases in 2000, increased dramatically to 2699 cases last year (2009), up 271.52%’ (Internet). Thus, considering these issues, it's understandable if parents in Korea, especially those with young children, feel uneasy about the safety of their communities.

In the world we live in, accidents and disasters are prevalent, and one never knows when, where, or how

one's life, including the lives of our children, may be at risk. Reflecting on major accidents in Korea since 1990, citizens have valid reasons to feel anxious and fearful. Job, who suffered through disasters and expressed his pain, stated in the book of Job 21:6, "When I remember, I am dismayed, and shuddering seizes my flesh."

In today's passage, Matthew 14:22-33, we witness the disciples of Jesus being in a state of anxiety and fear. In response to their fear, Jesus says, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid" (v. 27). I would like to meditate on today's passage under the title "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid" and draw two lessons that God may be imparting to us.

First, let's consider the fearful situation that Jesus' disciples encountered.

What was the fearful situation they faced?

Look at Matthew 14:24 - "But the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them." From this verse, we learn that Jesus' disciples were in a boat, and the first fearful situation they faced was the strong wind causing the boat to be beaten by the waves (experiencing hardship). So, how strong was the wind that caused the boat to be tossed by the waves? A similar story is recorded in John 6:15-21, where Apostle John describes the wind that blew during that time as a "strong wind," causing significant waves (v. 18). Can you imagine? If you were currently on a boat in the middle of the sea (Mk.6:47) and a strong wind was blowing, causing waves, how would you expect your boat to fare? In Jonah 1:4, when the prophet Jonah was disobedient to God's command and fled on a boat, God sent a great wind upon the sea, resulting in a mighty storm in the middle of the sea. Jonah's boat was almost breaking apart (v. 4).

You may recall the news of the sinking of the ferry Sewol in the waters near Jindo, Jeollanam-do, South Korea, on April 16, 2014. Of course, the cause of the accident was not a strong wind causing a storm and the sinking of the ship. The Korean government is currently investigating the cause of the accident. What I want to ponder here is the location where the accident occurred, known as the Maenggol Strait. This strait refers to the waterway between Maenggol Island and Geojae Island in Jindo, Jeollanam-do, recognized as the second most challenging tidal current area in Korea. The water flow in this area can reach up to 6 knots, or 11 km/h (Internet). Moreover, the tides change every six hours, making this passage a representative hazardous route even among sailors. However, the Maenggol Strait is not only characterized by strong currents but also serves as a turning point for domestic passenger ships heading to Jeju Island, known as a dangerous area with sharp turns. It is suggested that the ship may have capsized if it forcefully turned while inexperienced sailors struggled to navigate the challenging route, causing cargo and passengers to shift to one side (Internet). Imagine how fearful the people inside the sinking ship would have been at that moment. When the ship sank in such a dangerous passage, those inside would have experienced intense fear. In today's passage, Matthew 14:22-33, the disciples of Jesus faced a fearful situation as their boat was tossed by the waves due to the strong wind. At that time, they struggled to row, as mentioned in Mark 6:48. Why did they exert themselves to row? Naturally, they did so to survive. In Jonah 1:13, a similar situation is presented. When a great storm arose at sea due to Jonah's disobedience, the sailors, despite the danger, tried hard to row the ship to land before

throwing Jonah into the sea (v. 13).

In this way, while rowing for about 3-3.5 miles, the disciples encountered a second fearful situation: Jesus walking on the sea. Look at Matthew 14:26 - "But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, 'It is a ghost!' and they cried out in fear." Today's passage mentions that the time when the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea was the "fourth watch of the night," which corresponds to the period between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. in modern time (Walvoord). This implies that the disciples did not row for a brief period while facing the strong wind and waves; they likely rowed continuously, even through the night until the fourth watch. Therefore, they would have been exhausted, nearing fatigue and dehydration. At that moment, they witnessed Jesus walking on the sea. Of course, they did not recognize that it was Jesus, so in their extreme fear, they thought it was a ghost and cried out (v. 26). Why couldn't the disciples recognize Jesus walking on the sea and instead thought of Him as a ghost? The reason lies in the popular belief of that time, where the sea was considered the abode of evil spirits (Hagner). Perhaps the disciples initially regarded Jesus walking on the sea as an evil spirit. Having rowed the boat for hours, struggling against the strong wind and waves, and being in a state of physical and mental exhaustion, they might have easily mistaken any object walking on the sea as a ghost. They experienced intense fear.

When you look back on your past, when was the most intense fear you felt? What was the most frightening situation you encountered? Are any of you currently facing a situation that induces fear? Is anyone among you struggling with the fear of death? If so, I hope you can hear Jesus' voice today: "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid" (Mt. 14:27).

Why should we, as disciples of Jesus, take courage and not be afraid even in fearful situations?

Second, let's consider why we, as disciples of Jesus, should take courage and not be afraid in fearful situations.

We found about three reasons in the passage:

(1) The reason is that Jesus is praying for us.

Look at Matthew 14:23 - "And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone." The phrase "after he had dismissed the crowds" refers to the time after Jesus performed the miracle of feeding the 5,000 men with two fish and five loaves (vv. 13-21). After this, while Jesus sent the crowds away, He quickly made His disciples get into the boat and go to the other side ahead of Him (v. 22). Subsequently, after bidding farewell to (sending away) the crowds who were trying to forcefully make Him their king (Jn. 6:15), Jesus went up alone to the mountain (Mt. 14:23, Mk. 6:46). Why did Jesus go up alone to the mountain? He went up specifically to pray (Mt. 14:23, Mk. 6:46). By examining the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we can see that Jesus often went to solitary

places or mountains to pray (Mt. 14:23, 26:36; Mk. 1:35, 6:46, 14:32; Lk. 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 29, 11:1, 22:41, 44). Indeed, after hastily sending the disciples off in the boat, Jesus went up alone to the mountain to pray (Mt. 14:23, Mk. 6:46). Although today's passage in Matthew 14 does not record the content of Jesus' prayer, considering the well-known prayer of Jesus in John 17, it is plausible that Jesus prayed for His disciples. Look at John 17:9 - "I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours." So, what might Jesus have prayed for His disciples? One aspect of His prayer was asking God to "keep" them. In other words, Jesus prayed for God the Father to protect them safely (Jn. 17:11, 15). The same Jesus, who is unchanging, is still interceding for us today, as Hebrews 7:25 declares. Even now, Jesus is interceding with God the Father, asking for His protection over us, His children. Therefore, those who believe in Jesus, including myself and all of you, should take heart and not be afraid because Jesus is continually praying for our safety.

(2) The reason we should take courage and not be afraid even in fearful situations is that Jesus ensures our safety and protection.

Jesus is not merely a Lord who prays to God the Father for our safety and protection. We can understand this when we look at John 17:12 - "While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Jesus did not only pray for His disciples; He actually kept them safe and guarded them because He was present with them. In today's passage, Matthew 14:25, after spending the night in prayer on the mountain, Jesus, during the night between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m., saw His disciples struggling with the strong wind and waves in the sea. He went to them, walking on the water (Mk. 6:47-48), showing His concern for their distress. Why did He do that? The reason was to ensure the safety of His disciples as He had prayed. Psalms 4:8 states, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." The reason we can lie down and sleep in peace is that the Lord keeps us safe. Through today's passage, Jesus is saying to you and me, "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid" (Mt. 14:27). Therefore, those who believe in Jesus, including myself and all of you, should take heart and not be afraid because Jesus is continually ensuring our safety.

(3) The reason we should take courage and not be afraid even in fearful situations is that when we cry out, "Lord, save me," Jesus immediately rescues us.

In today's passage, Matthew 14:30-31, we see the disciples of Jesus who were on a boat and, upon seeing the wind, became afraid and started to sink. Crying out, one of them, Peter, said, "Lord, save me!" Immediately, Jesus reached out His hand, took hold of him, and said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" The background of these words is when the disciples, in their boat, saw Jesus walking on the water and, startled, cried out, thinking He was a ghost. In response, Jesus immediately reassured them, saying, "Take courage. It is I. Do not be afraid" (Mt. 14:26-27). It was during this incident that Peter, hearing Jesus' voice, asked to

come to Him on the water. Jesus commanded him to come, and Peter, obeying, walked on the water toward Jesus. However, when he saw the strong wind, he was afraid and began to sink. At that moment, Peter cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out His hand, caught him, and said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" How should we interpret Jesus' words here? Is Peter indeed a person of "little faith"? Would we, like Peter, obey Jesus' command to come out of the boat onto the water? Even though Peter did walk on the water, Jesus rebuked him for his doubt. In a similar incident recorded in Matthew 8:23-27, Peter and the other disciples experienced a great storm while in a boat. The boat was being swamped by the waves, and they cried out to Jesus, who was sleeping, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." Jesus responded by rebuking them for their fear and then calmed the storm. The disciples marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Mt. 8:27). In today's passage, Matthew 14:32, after Jesus immediately reached out His hand and rescued Peter from sinking, the wind ceased. This left the disciples amazed (Mk. 6:51). Why were they so astonished, having already experienced Jesus calming the sea in Matthew 8? Mark 6:52 provides insight: "for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened." The reason was that their hearts were hardened. Despite having witnessed Jesus calming the sea before (Mt. 8:26), their hearts were still hardened. In their amazement, the disciples confessed, "Truly you are the Son of God" (14:33). Jesus, indeed the Son of God, not only rescued Peter from sinking but also rescued His disciples from the dangerous and fearful situation caused by the strong wind and tempest. Jesus calmed the sea to ensure their safety. The reason is that Jesus is the Savior. The name "Jesus" means 'God is salvation.' True to His name, Jesus saved His disciples in the midst of a fearful situation. Therefore, those who believe in Jesus must have confidence in salvation. We must believe that the Lord is the God who saves us in times of fear.

Today, Jesus said to you and me, "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." Regardless of the fearful situations we may find ourselves in, we should not only pray for ourselves but also rely on God, who not only intercedes for us but actually protects and guards us. We should seek God's salvation with confidence and pray to Him in faith. Surely, God will respond to our prayers and rescue you and me. I hope and pray that you and I become those who do not fear because of our ever-watchful Lord.

Those who Worship God in Vain.

[Matthew 15:1-20]

God willing to respond to your prayers and bless you and your beloved family members, would you not worship God with gratitude? Especially when you or your loved ones are suffering from illness, facing a critical moment of life and death, if God answers your earnest prayers, heals the disease, and grants life, wouldn't you worship God in thanksgiving? However, if God does not answer your prayers as expected and your loved ones die from the illness, would you still be able to worship God? Do you think it is possible?

Looking at Job 1:20, we can see that it is possible: "Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped." Job, described as "blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil" (Job 1:1), lost all his ten children and possessions, yet he rose, worshiped, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell to the ground in worship. Not only Job but also David, after fasting and praying for the recovery of his son born from Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:15), worshiped God when the child died (v. 19). David got up from the ground, washed, anointed himself, changed his clothes, went into the house of the Lord, and worshiped (v. 20). This is true faith. This is what we, as Christians saved by the amazing grace of God through Jesus, should do: worship God. Jesus said in John 4:23-24, "The hour is coming, and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

In today's passage, Matthew 15:9, the second half of the verse, the Bible says: "... in vain do they worship me." I would like to consider today, under the title "Those who Worship God in Vain," who are the ones worshipping God in vain in three aspects.

First, those who worship God in vain are legalists and hypocrites.

Look at Matthew 15:1 - "Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said." The Pharisees

and scribes mentioned in today's passage were religious leaders of that time who received strong rebukes from Jesus, such as calling them "brood of vipers, offspring of snakes" (23:33). Even the tax collectors and sinners, considered as such at that time, were not rebuked by Jesus, but why did Jesus strongly rebuke the Pharisees and scribes? The reason is that they were legalists. Who were the legalists? They were those who believed in salvation not through faith in Jesus but through their deeds. Therefore, they emphasized three things: keeping the law of Moses, circumcision, and the tradition of the elders. Although the Bible clearly states that we are not saved by our works (Tit. 3:5) but through faith in Jesus (Eph. 2:8), the Pharisees and scribes, who were legalists, diligently adhered to the law of Moses, circumcision, and the tradition of the elders. However, their zeal was not based on correct knowledge (Rom. 10:2). Jesus strongly rebuked them, calling them "brood of vipers, offspring of snakes." Why did Jesus rebuke them so severely? The reason lies in their hypocrisy. Look at Matthew 15:7 - "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said." This statement quotes Isaiah 29:13, and Jesus refers to the Pharisees and scribes as "hypocrites." Why did Jesus call them hypocrites? The reason is clearly stated in Matthew 15:8-9, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." The hypocrites, the Pharisees, and scribes honored God with their lips but their hearts were far from God. In other words, they worshiped God in vain.

Jesus addressed the hypocrites who worship God in vain, emphasizing their empty actions and love for praise from others. In Matthew 23, He repeated this message seven times. Two key points illustrate this:

(1) Hypocrites talk but don't act (Mt. 23:3).

Jesus warned not to imitate their actions because even though their words were wrong, their deeds were not entirely evil. Today, there are individuals in the church who, though speaking correctly, live contrary to their words. They come to worship on Sundays, offering lip service to God, yet their lives don't reflect true worship. Jesus condemns such hypocrisy, saying, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (15:8).

(2) Hypocrites seek praise and exaltation from others (23:5-7).

The Pharisees and scribes loved the uppermost seats at feasts, the chief places in the synagogues (v. 6), and being greeted in the marketplaces (v. 7a). They enjoyed being called "Rabbi" (Teacher) by people (v. 7b). Their actions were done to be seen by others (v. 5). Consequently, the Pharisees and scribes sought glory from people even when giving alms (6:2). They also liked to pray standing in the synagogues and at the street corners to be seen by others (v. 5). Even today, those who practice hypocrisy like the Pharisees and scribes pray and serve to be seen by people. Those who seek praise and admiration from others, like the Pharisees and scribes, are stealing glory instead of giving it to God. This is a form of empty worship before God.

We must abandon hypocrisy, appearing righteous outwardly while lacking true worship inwardly (1 Pet. 2:1). If there

is hypocrisy within us, we must discard it (Mt. 23:28). We should no longer come before the Lord and worship God with only our lips. We must worship God with all our hearts and sincerity.

Second, those who worship God in vain are people who consider human traditions more important than God's commandments.

Look at Matthew 15:3 - "He answered them, 'And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?'" What was the tradition of the elders that the Pharisees and scribes emphasized? In Matthew 15:2, we see that the tradition they valued was washing hands before eating bread. Mark provides a more detailed explanation in Mark 7:3-4: "For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders, and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels." The tradition that the hypocritical Pharisees and scribes valued included washing hands before eating, washing when coming from the marketplace, and various other practices, none of which are teachings from the Scriptures. According to Josephus, a historian of Jewish descent, the Pharisees inherited many rules not recorded in Moses' law (Park). However, Jesus' disciples did not follow these traditions, as observed by the Pharisees and scribes when they saw the disciples eating without washing their hands (Mt. 15:2; Mk. 7:2). So, they approached Jesus and asked, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat" (Mt. 15:2). For them, unwashed hands meant unclean hands (Mk. 7:2). Therefore, in Mark 7:5, the Pharisees and scribes questioned Jesus, saying, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders but eat with defiled hands?" At that moment, Jesus responded to them, saying, "Why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Mt. 15:3). Mark 7:8-9 states: "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men. And he said to them, 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!'" The Pharisees and scribes not only broke God's commandments but completely abandoned them. What commandment did they abandon and break? Look at Matthew 15:4: "For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.'" This quote refers to Exodus 20:12 and Exodus 21:17. However, the Pharisees and scribes broke this commandment. How did they break it? By declaring that whatever should be given to their parents is a gift devoted to God (Corban) and, therefore, exempt from supporting their parents (Mk. 7:11-12). Rabbis taught that if anyone vowed to give their possessions to the temple and used this vow to avoid fulfilling their responsibility to financially support their parents, it was a clear tactic to evade the duty of parental support (Park). This was an outright attempt to shirk parental obligations, a sin of appalling magnitude, and a great evil that exploited the sacred name of serving God (Park).

Now, are we Christians committing such sins against God? Certainly, 1 Timothy 5:4 says, "But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God." Could it be that, under the pretext of serving the Lord, we are not showing godliness in our own homes, failing to make a return to our parents? Furthermore, 1 Timothy 5:8 states, "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is

worse than an unbeliever." Are we neglecting our families, using the excuse of dedicating ourselves to the Lord? If we do not care for our families and fail to show godliness towards our parents, while presenting ourselves before the Lord to worship on Sundays, we are currently worshiping God in vain. If we live by human traditions or rules made by people, rather than God's commandments, and yet claim to worship God, we are currently worshiping God in vain. If we lead a religious life based on human traditions or rules during the week, violating God's commandments, and then come to worship God on Sundays, we are currently worshiping God in vain. If we profess to honor an unseen God with our lips but do not honor our visible flesh-and-blood parents, we are currently worshiping God in vain. We must not worship God in vain. We must worship God rightly. To worship God rightly, we must obey His commandments. We must obey the command to honor our parents while worshiping God.

Third and last, those who worship God in vain are people with defiled hearts.

Today, look at Matthew 15:11 and 18: "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person. ... But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person." Does what goes into the mouth defile a person, or is it what comes out of the mouth? In Matthew 15:11, Jesus says that it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person. What does this mean? It means that external things, such as not washing hands before eating, cannot morally or religiously defile a person (Park). Why did Jesus say this? It's because the Pharisees thought that if Jesus' disciples ate without washing their hands, the food would morally defile them (Park). So Jesus said that whatever goes into the mouth cannot defile a person (Mk. 7:18), and in Mark 7:19, He explained the reason: "since it enters not his heart but his stomach and is expelled." Jesus emphasized that all foods are clean. Instead, Jesus says that what comes out of the mouth defiles a person. Why is that? It's because what comes out of the mouth originates from the heart, and if the heart is unclean, the words spoken will be unclean. What kind of heart is unclean? If we summarize Matthew 15:19 and a similar passage, Mark 7:21-22, it includes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, arrogance, and folly. "All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person" (Mk. 7:23), Jesus said. Then, in Matthew 15:20, Jesus said, "These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone." What does this mean? From the Pharisees and scribes' legalistic and hypocritical perspective, Jesus' disciples eating with unwashed hands (unclean hands) seemed to defile them morally. However, Jesus emphasized that eating with unwashed hands does not defile anyone; rather, what comes out of the mouth, all the evil things from the heart, defiles a person. Here, we see a difference in perspective between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes. Jesus focuses on the heart of a person, while the Pharisees and scribes focus on the outward appearance of a person. Therefore, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and scribes, saying:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence" (Matthew 23:25),

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean" (v. 27),

"In the same way, on the outside, you appear to people as righteous but, on the inside, you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness" (v. 28).

We should dedicate ourselves to cleansing our hearts, which God sees, rather than focusing on maintaining a clean appearance visible to people. The reason is that God does not judge solely based on outward appearances, but He looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). Therefore, to dedicate our hearts, meaning our inner selves, to God, we need to listen to His word and gain wisdom to guide our hearts in the right direction (Prov. 23:19). Obtaining the wisdom that reveres God is essential to lead our hearts on the right path (v. 17). Without this, we may end up like the hypocritical Pharisees, appearing devoted in religious practices outwardly but committing sins in the love of money and greed within our hearts (Lk. 16:14). Thus, our first and foremost task should be diligently listening to the words of our Heavenly Father (Prov. 4:10-11). We must treasure His words in our hearts and diligently keep and obey them (v. 4). By doing so, we can guide our hearts on the right path. Additionally, we need to obey the truth of God's word. Consider 1 Peter 1:22 - "Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart." We must purify our souls by obeying the truth. Therefore, I wish for you and me to be worshippers of God with clean hearts, dedicated to His truth.

Those who worship God in vain are legalists, hypocrites, and those who prioritize human traditions over God's commandments. Moreover, they are individuals with impure hearts. We must not be among those who worship God in vain; instead, we should be true worshippers of God. We should abandon all hypocrisy and worship God with all our hearts and sincerity. Additionally, we must obey God's commandments while worshiping Him. We should be worshippers with clean hearts, offering glory to God.

“O woman, your faith is great”

[Matthew 15:21-28]

Last week, I read a book titled “Freedom from Financial Fear.” I was drawn to this book because of its intriguing title, and also because it was written by Pastor James Kennedy, the creator of the evangelistic track “Evangelism Explosion.” One of the key points emphasized by Pastor Kennedy in the book was to “trust in God’s promises.” Among the numerous promises in the Bible, he focused on Malachi 3:8-10. The highlighted Bible verses state: “Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” The promise conveyed in these verses is that if we bring our full tithe to God, He will open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings until there is no more need. Pastor Kennedy encourages believers to trust in this promise and faithfully tithe to God. However, the reality is that many Christians do not tithe for various reasons. Pastor Kennedy explains, “Tithing is not a matter of finance; it is a matter of faith.” This statement suggests that the reason we may not tithe is not due to a lack of financial resources but rather a lack of genuine belief in God’s promise found in Malachi 3:10. What are your thoughts on Pastor Kennedy’s statement?

Do you think your faith and mine are strong or weak? As I continued to meditate on the Gospel of Matthew, I had a moment when I became more aware of how small my own faith is. This realization came while contemplating Matthew 14:22-33, the passage where Peter, walking on water, starts to sink after seeing the wind and Jesus says to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” What are your thoughts on Jesus’ words here? Do you believe that Peter had “little faith”? Would you, like Peter, obey Jesus’ command to come out of the boat and walk on water if you were in the same situation? Yet, despite any doubts, Peter did step out of the boat and walked on water for a moment. How incredible is that act of faith? Nevertheless, Jesus said to Peter, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” So, how would you describe our faith in the eyes of the Lord? Even the short-

lived walk on water by Peter, considered "little faith" by Jesus, makes me wonder: would our faith, often filled with doubt like Thomas, be considered great in the eyes of the Lord?

In today's passage, Matthew 15:21-28, we see a woman whom Jesus acknowledges as having great faith. Look at verse 28: "Then Jesus answered her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed instantly." Matthew mentions that this woman with great faith is a Canaanite woman (v. 22). Additionally, Mark 7:25-26 provides more details about her: "But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth." According to Mark, this woman with great faith is identified as a Gentile, specifically a Syrophenician. Moreover, Mark notes that she is a woman with a daughter possessed by an unclean spirit. Reflecting on this woman, considered a Gentile, I would like to draw two lessons on what it means to have great faith.

First, those with great faith are the ones who believe that Jesus is the Lord and the Christ.

Look at Mark 7:24-25 - "And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet." The Bible mentions that Jesus arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon from there, referring to the land of Gennesaret in the northwest of Galilee (Mt. 14:34). We know that Pharisees and scribes had come to Jesus from Jerusalem while he was there (15:1). They criticized Jesus and his disciples for not washing their hands before eating, pointing out that they were violating the tradition of the elders (v. 2). Jesus rebuked them for worshiping God in vain, stating that their hearts were far from God, even though they honored Him with their lips (v. 8). After addressing them, Jesus left that place and went to the region of Tyre. However, Mark says that when Jesus entered a house there, he did not want anyone to know but could not be hidden (Mk. 7:24). It seems a bit peculiar, doesn't it? Why did Jesus go to a house in the region of Tyre, trying not to be noticed? Although we may not understand the reason for Jesus hiding, one thing is clear: a woman with a daughter possessed by an unclean spirit heard about Jesus and immediately came to him (v. 25). We don't know how this Canaanite woman heard about Jesus or how she found the house where Jesus was staying in the region of Tyre. However, what is certain is that she came to Jesus. Moreover, she came to Jesus immediately upon hearing about him. According to the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, the region of Tyre where Jesus and the Canaanite woman met was an area attached to Galilee's north side, inhabited by Gentiles who had been hostile to the Jews (Park). So, could this Canaanite woman, as a Gentile, have been an enemy of Jesus, like the other Gentiles in the area? Or, at least, should she have been an enemy of Jesus like the surrounding Gentiles? However, how did she come to Jesus immediately upon hearing about him? The reason is that this Canaanite woman did not consider Jesus merely as a Jewish person like other Gentiles did. She believed and knew (recognized) Jesus as the Lord, a descendant of King David. Look at Matthew 15:22: "And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came

out and was crying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.'" Notice that this Gentile woman referred to Jesus as "Lord" (vv. 22, 25). She not only called Jesus Lord but also addressed him as the Son of David. From this, we can see that she believed in Jesus as the Lord and the Christ (Messiah). With this faith, she came to Jesus.

Last week, I read a Christian newspaper that introduced three types of Christians among current American Christians, one of which is cultural Christians. When thinking about the Canaanite woman in today's passage, I wondered if she would have come to Jesus immediately upon hearing about him if she were a cultural Christian. The reason for this thought was that if she were a cultural Christian, she might not have come to Jesus, an enemy Jew culturally, upon hearing about him. One might consider, "Even though culturally, our Gentile people are enemies of those Jews, maybe I should go and see if this Jewish Jesus can possibly heal my beloved daughter possessed by a demon." If the Canaanite woman had approached Jesus with such an attitude, she wouldn't have addressed Jesus as the "Son of David." Moreover, if she had approached Jesus in that way, Jesus wouldn't have praised her faith, and her daughter would not have been healed. Isn't that right? So, what kind of Christian are you? Are you truly a Christian who believes that Jesus is your Lord and Christ, having the assurance of salvation?

Second, those with great faith are those who earnestly plead with the Lord.

In today's passage, Matthew 15:22, the Canaanite woman approached Jesus and cried out in this way: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." She passionately cried out to the Lord, pleading for mercy for her daughter, who suffered severely from demon possession. It seems that she didn't just cry out once; we can infer this from Matthew 15:23, where the disciples asked Jesus to send her away, saying, "For she is crying out after us." Especially when looking at the English translation, it becomes evident that she continued to cry out after the disciples made the request. Despite Jesus not answering her plea at first (v. 23), she continued to follow Jesus and persistently cried out. What was she so earnestly praying for? She continuously pleaded with Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter (Mk. 7:26).

If Jesus does not respond to your earnest prayers and remains silent, would you continue to offer the same prayer to the Lord? The psalmist in Psalms 22:2 expressed a similar plea: "O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest." Is this only the psalmist's prayer, or is it not also your prayer and mine? Even when we earnestly pray, if there is no response from God, we still continue to cry out to Him. I believe it's not easy to persistently offer the same prayer without possessing a strong faith. Without a robust faith, it's challenging to humbly accept God's silence. Especially when, despite our fervent supplications, God remains silent, we may feel that He has hidden His face from us and moved away (35:22). At such times, we can pray as the psalmist did in Psalms 83:1: "O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God."

Why do you think Jesus did not respond even though the Canaanite woman continuously cried out to

Him? The silence of the Lord was to discern whether her faith was genuine (Park). What lesson does this teach us? When our prayers seem unanswered, when it seems like God is silent, we need to examine our faith. Looking back, we should reflect on whether our faith is earnest, whether we are passionately seeking the Lord. In Matthew 7:7, Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." When our prayers seem unanswered, and it feels like the Lord is silent, we need to turn back and examine our faith. Do we truly have an earnest faith, and are we passionately seeking the Lord? The Canaanite woman continuously cried out to Jesus, saying, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon" (Mt. 15:22). Even though Jesus did not respond to her at first, she kept on crying out. This woman's continuous crying out prompted the disciples to ask Jesus to send her away (v. 23). At that moment, Jesus told them, "... I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (v. 24).

Why did Jesus speak to His disciples in this way? Was it truly the case that Jesus received the mission only for the lost sheep of the house of Israel? Perhaps upon hearing Jesus' words, His disciples might have thought, "Ah, Jesus received the mission only for the people of Israel. Our Lord did not come for other nations (Gentiles)." Regardless of whether they had such thoughts or not, the crucial point is understanding who Jesus referred to as the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The answer lies more in a spiritual perspective rather than a nationalistic view of the Jewish people—specifically, the chosen people of God (Jere. 50:6). If Jesus came solely for the Jewish people from a nationalistic standpoint, why did the resurrected Jesus appoint Paul, a Gentile apostle? Additionally, when we examine Jesus' famous prayer in John 17, we see that He prayed not for the "world" but for those given to Him by God, the Father's people (Jn. 17:9). Therefore, when Jesus said to His disciples, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," it means that Jesus received His mission from God the Father exclusively for His people. The reason Jesus spoke this way was to test the faith of the Canaanite woman (Park). He wanted to examine whether her faith truly believed in Him as the Lord and the Christ. At that moment, the Canaanite woman came and worshipped Jesus, pleading, "Lord, help me" (Mt. 15:25). Here, "worshipped" in the original Greek means 'to bow down,' signifying a humble posture of a worshipper. In other words, the Canaanite woman humbly prostrated herself before Jesus, acknowledging Him as her Lord and the Messiah, the Son of David. Jesus responded to her plea by saying, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (v. 26). What does this mean? In this context, "children" from a Jewish perspective refers exclusively to Jews, and "dogs" refer to Gentiles. Therefore, Jesus was saying that it is not appropriate to give the blessings of the kingdom (such as healing) meant for God's children, the Jews, to Gentiles (Park). Here again, Jesus was testing the faith of the Canaanite woman. If she lacked faith, she might have resented Jesus and walked away (Park). However, she responded by saying, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table" (v. 27). How do you perceive the words of this Canaanite woman? When I think about her words, I am reminded of pigeons scavenging for food under a table when dining outside or dogs roaming around medical mission tables in the Philippines. Seeing those dogs looking malnourished, it seemed like they were struggling to eat. The Canaanite woman recognized herself as a Gentile, akin to a dog, and she acknowledged Jesus as her "Master" (Lord). In the midst of this, she expressed her plea for Jesus to show compassion to her as well, even if it's just the crumbs of the blessings of the kingdom (v. 22). How humbly and earnestly she approached the Lord, asking for the smallest portion of His grace. How humble and earnest she was in pleading

with the Lord. What did Jesus say in response to her? "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed" (v. 28). He commended her great faith, and from that moment, her daughter was healed.

What is the fervent prayer title that you are earnestly praying to the Lord right now? What is the prayer that you continue to cry out to God with a sense of urgency? Are you fervently praying for your loved one to recover quickly from an illness? Perhaps you are continuously calling on the Lord for a beloved family member who is at a crossroads between life and death? Even if it's not now, have you ever prayed so desperately before? As you know, there will be times in the future when we all need to pray so earnestly. At that time, let us hope that, like the Canaanite woman in today's passage, we will receive an answer to our fervent prayers not only because of our desperate supplications but also because of our humble and fervent prayers with great faith in Jesus Christ. May we, in Jesus' name, receive not only the answer to our earnest wishes but also the praise from the Lord saying, "your faith is great" (v.28).

Conclusion

We must love our neighbors with the heart of Jesus Christ. We should care for and pray for our neighbors, and also participate in the work of the gospel for their sake. Following Jesus' command, we need to go to the lost souls. The Lord has sent us to the lost sheep in this world. He has sent us to our homes, workplaces, and neighbors. Therefore, we must obey the Lord's command and go. Additionally, we need to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to our neighbors. We should find those with open hearts about the gospel and, relying on God entirely, move forward into this world to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them. Furthermore, we should be wise as serpents and innocent as doves, just as Jesus commanded. Also, we should not be afraid, as Jesus instructed. Even if those who hate Jesus persecute us, we should not fear them. No matter how difficult the situation may be, we should not be afraid. The reason is that God loves us, considers us precious and honorable, and because we are God's possession, we should not be afraid. Since the Lord prays for us, we should not fear but rather be at peace. The reason is that the Lord protects us safely. Moreover, as the Lord listens to our supplications and will save us, we should not be afraid but rather be reassured. Instead, we should fear God, revere Him, and those who fear God hate evil. We should hate evil and reject the worship of God in vain. We should not be hypocritical worshippers. We should not prioritize human traditions over God's commandments. We should cleanse our hearts, get rid of all impurities, and repent daily. Therefore, we should become worshippers worthy in God's sight. Also, we should have faith in Jesus being the Lord and Christ. We should be fervent in prayer, becoming believers with great faith who receive answers to our prayers. Especially, we should diligently guard our hearts, maintaining a good heart. Hence, we should listen to God's word obediently and live a life of obedience to that word. Living a life of obedience, we should faithfully run the race of faith until the end of the world. While praying and anticipating the return of Jesus, we should love our brothers and sisters with the heart of Jesus Christ, and to each dying soul, we should proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. In conclusion, as we live a life worthy of the gospel, let us open our hearts and lips, proclaiming Jesus' death, resurrection, and second coming. Therefore, I pray that when the Lord comes again to this world, you and I will stand before Him and receive the praise, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant."