

Woe to the Hypocritical Pastors

[Short Word Meditation (41)]

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4 Key points

Jesus, who was so busy with people coming and going that there was no time to eat, told His disciples, "Let us go to a quiet place and rest for a while." So, Jesus and His companions took a boat and headed to a "quiet place" (or "solitary place" in the Korean Revised Version). When the many people saw them leaving, they recognized Jesus and came running from various towns by land, arriving there before them. When Jesus disembarked and saw the large crowd, He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. He began to teach them many things (Mark 6:30-34). As I reflect on this passage, I think of 4 key points:

(1) The Importance of Rest:

When I think of Jesus telling His disciples, "Let us go to a 'solitary place' (or 'quiet place') and rest for a while," even though He Himself had no time to eat, I realize that, like Jesus' words, we ministers must also take time to rest in a "solitary place" ["quiet place" or "peaceful place"], even if it's just for a while. I believe the same applies to the believers. God, who created the heavens and the earth, worked for six days to create the world, and on the seventh day, He completed His work and rested (Exodus 31:17). Yet today, it seems that we work for six days and do not know how to rest on the seventh day, the Sabbath. We must rest when it's time to rest. We all need "rest." Although we bear heavy burdens that God has given us to carry while living in this world (Ecclesiastes 3:10), we must humbly respond to Jesus' invitation, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), and find rest in Him.

(2) The Importance of a Quiet Place:

I believe that Jesus' practice of praying alone in a quiet place, having intimate fellowship with God the Father, was the central backbone of all His ministry (His public life). Therefore, we too need to have our own quiet place, a place of prayer. We need training to be alone in a quiet place, with a quiet heart, during quiet moments. We must learn to be still before God. There are times when we need to put aside our ministry as well. We should not be like Martha, who was so busy with work. We need to leave behind the complexity of our daily lives and go to a quiet place. We need time and space alone. We must stop everything and come quietly before the Lord, taking time to meditate on His Word and spend time in prayer. In doing so, we will experience God's presence with us and grow in the ability to transform the lonely wilderness into a garden of solitude.

(3) The Importance of Compassion:

As I meditate on the passage where Jesus, after disembarking from the boat, saw the large crowd and had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, I found the reason for this in Matthew 9:36: "When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Korean Modern Bible). In reality, just as this passage describes, how many believers around us are suffering because there are no true shepherds (pastors) who resemble Jesus? Why are they suffering? Could it be because they are not hearing the true gospel of Jesus Christ through a true shepherd, a pastor? And perhaps they are not experiencing the true love of Jesus? Therefore, aren't they spiritually malnourished, suffering from a lack of God's love and not receiving the true Word of God? When we see such wandering souls, should we not, like Jesus, lift up a heart of compassion for each and every one of them?

(4) The Importance of the Ministry of Teaching:

When Jesus saw the large crowd and had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, He taught them many things. The apostles, following Jesus' example, devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the ministry of teaching (Mark 6:30; Acts 6:4). Therefore, those who are entrusted with God's Word, the servants of the Lord, must teach in a way that the Word of Christ dwells richly among us, teaching with all wisdom (Colossians 3:16), and must teach well (2 Timothy 2:24). We must teach in accordance with sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). These are the words of Jesus: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20, Korean Modern Bible).

**"Let us go to the neighboring towns and preach.
I came to do this work."**

When Simon and his companions found Jesus,
they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."
At that time, Jesus said to them, "Let us go to the neighboring towns and preach.
I came to do this work," and He traveled throughout Galilee,
preaching in the synagogues and driving out demons
(Mark 1:36-39, Korean Modern Bible).

As I meditate on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) Why were "everyone" looking for Jesus? I believe it was because they wanted healing from Him.
- (2) However, the purpose for which Jesus came into this world was preaching, not healing. It would be good for us to reflect on the purpose of our own lives.
- (3) Jesus preached not only where He was but also went to the "neighboring towns," which teaches us that we should first preach to our "near neighbors"—those in our family, relatives, friends, and coworkers who do not yet believe in Jesus.
- (4) When we see that Jesus also "drove out demons," it seems that there were many demon-possessed people in the first century, more than we might realize (Mark 1:27, 34; 5:12-13; Matthew 8:16, 31-32; Luke 4:36, 41; 8:2, 31-33; 10:17, 20; 13:32; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 19:12-13; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Revelation 18:2, Korean Modern Bible).

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

At the Last Supper, even though Jesus knew that Judas Iscariot would betray Him, He took the bread while His disciples were eating, gave a "prayer of thanksgiving," broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." He also took the cup, gave a "prayer of thanksgiving," and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you the truth, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." After this, "they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:20-30, Modern Bible).

As I meditate on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) Despite knowing that His beloved disciple, Judas Iscariot, would betray Him, Jesus still gave a prayer of thanksgiving to God the Father. This leads me to reflect on the scripture that says, "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Jesus obeyed this word.
- (2) When Jesus said, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins," the "all" must have included Judas Iscariot as well. I wonder what thoughts went through his mind as he drank the blood of Jesus, which was poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Did he recognize his sin with a guilty conscience? Did he miss the opportunity for repentance?
- (3) The Bible says, "They sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives," but was Judas Iscariot among "them"? If so, how could he have sung a hymn? I was reminded of Matthew 15:8: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Korean Modern Bible).

“Healthy people do not need a doctor, but only the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

As Jesus was walking along, He saw Levi sitting at the tax collector's booth and said, "Follow me." Levi got up and followed Him, and not only that, he invited Jesus to his house. At the house, Jesus sat and ate with many tax collectors and sinners who followed Him. When the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (scribes) saw this, they asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard this, He said, "Healthy people do not need a doctor, but only the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:14-17, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflect on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) It is quite interesting that Jesus called Levi ["Matthew" (Matthew 9:9)].

The reason is that Levi, as a tax collector, belonged to a group of sinners who were thoroughly despised and hated by his fellow Jews at that time (Hokma). This is because tax collectors were particularly notorious for being contracted by the rulers to collect taxes, often draining the people's blood and engaging in various forms of exploitation, and in the case of Levi, he collected irregular taxes on goods passing through borders, which he handed over to the Roman government (Hokma). Why did Jesus call such a person to be His disciple? The answer can be found in 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 in the Korean Modern Bible: "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him." Perhaps the reason Jesus called Levi, a despised person in the eyes of the Jews, was to "shame the wise and the strong" of the world, and to prevent him from "boasting before God."

- (2) It is interesting that Jesus accepted Levi's invitation and went to his house to eat with "many tax collectors and sinners."

The reason this is interesting is that Jesus must have known that by eating with Levi and the "many tax collectors and sinners" (Mark 2:15, 16, Korean Modern Bible), He would certainly be criticized by the Pharisees and teachers of the law, who were closely watching His every move. In fact, they asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (v. 16, Korean Modern Bible). As we know, in Galatians 2:11-14, the Apostle Peter, while eating with Gentile believers in Antioch, left the table when certain Jews came from Jerusalem, fearing that they might accuse him of breaking the custom by eating with Gentiles. "The reason Peter acted this way was because, according to the customs of the Jews who considered themselves devout at the time, eating with Gentiles was prohibited" (Acts 10:28, 11:3)

(Internet). Ultimately, Peter, due to Jewish customs, broke God's commandments (Ref: Matthew 15:3) and did not continue to eat with Gentiles, unlike Jesus. As a result, he was rebuked by the Apostle Paul in front of many people (Galatians 2:11). Today, we should not be afraid to eat with "sinners," whom many Christians tend to judge and avoid, even if only in our hearts.

(3) It is interesting that when Jesus heard what the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to His disciples, He responded, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17, Korean Modern Bible).

The reason this is interesting is that, as the spiritual doctor, Jesus was indeed saying that He had come to call those whom the Pharisees and teachers of the law referred to as "sinners" ("sick people"). This statement indicates that the law scholars, who sought to be justified by observing the law, viewed themselves as "healthy" and "righteous," and therefore, Jesus was not calling them. Those who know they are sick will naturally recognize they need a doctor. Likewise, those who know they are sinners will recognize they need Jesus, who forgives sins. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace" (Ephesians 1:7, Korean Modern Bible). "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (2:8-9, Korean Modern Bible).

The Necessity of Suffering, Death, and Resurrection

From the moment Jesus warned His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ, He began to explain that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and be killed, and on the third day be raised to life (Matthew 16:20-21, Korean Modern Bible). When Jesus said this clearly, Peter took Him aside and rebuked Him, saying, "Never, Lord! This shall never happen to You!" (v. 22, Korean Modern Bible). But Jesus turned and looked at His disciples, rebuked Peter, and said, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns" (v. 23, Korean Modern Bible). Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what they have done. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (vv. 24-28, Korean Modern Bible) ["Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27, Modern Bible)] ["If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38, Modern Bible)]. As I reflect on these words, I have several thoughts:

- (1) Why did Jesus begin to clearly reveal that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, be killed, and on the third day be raised to life, only after warning His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ? (Matthew 16:20-21; Mark 8:31-32). Why did Jesus begin to clearly state that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer, die, and be resurrected after Peter confessed, through the revelation from God the Father in heaven, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God"? (Matthew 16:16-17, Korean Modern Bible). In my opinion, the reason is that Jesus knew His time was near ['My hour' (John 2:4, 7:6, 8:20, 12:4, 23, 27, 13:1, 17:1)]. Jesus' "time" refers to the moment when, as God's Son, He would be crucified to redeem God's chosen people. In other words, Jesus' "time" refers to the moment when He would reveal His glory as the Son of God. Therefore, after Peter's confession, Jesus began to clearly reveal to His disciples that, as the Christ, He would go to Jerusalem, suffer, die, and rise again on the third day. The first half of Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 (Korean Modern Bible) says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die." God the Father appointed the time for His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be born into this world (His birth) and the time for Him to be crucified and die. Jesus Christ was born in the manger in Bethlehem and lived for about 33 years, destined to die on the cross at Golgotha. Throughout this process, Jesus began to reveal to His disciples that He would go to Jerusalem,

suffer at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law (the necessity of suffering), be killed (the necessity of death), and be resurrected on the third day (the necessity of resurrection).

- (2) Why did the apostle Peter rebuke Jesus, holding Him back, and say, "Lord, this shall never happen to You" (Mark 8:32, Korean Modern Bible) when Jesus spoke about His suffering and death? (Matthew 16:22) Why, out of all the disciples, did Peter, who had made the faithful confession that "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (v. 16, Korean Modern Bible), be the one to rebuke Jesus in this way? Why did Peter, who had made such a precious confession through the revelation of God the Father in heaven (v. 17), think only of human concerns and not God's will (v. 23) when Jesus said He must go to Jerusalem, suffer, die, and rise on the third day? Why did Peter become a tool used by Satan (Hokma) in attempting to stop Jesus from fulfilling His mission? Why did Peter, who confidently declared, "Even if all fall away on account of You, I never will" and "Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You" (26:33, 35, Korean Modern Bible), later deny Jesus three times? (vv. 70, 72, 74) Jesus had also said to Peter: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (26:41). Therefore, Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings."
- (3) Why did Jesus say to His disciples, "Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me and the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:34-35, Korean Modern Bible)? Perhaps the reason is that Jesus, knowing in advance that Peter would deny Him three times (Matthew 16:70, 72, 74), even though Peter had confidently declared, "Even if all fall away on account of You, I never will," and "Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You," (vv. 33, 35, Korean Modern Bible), said these words because, as the all-knowing God, He foresaw what would happen. If we truly wish to follow Jesus, we must (a) deny ourselves and not deny Jesus, (b) take up the cross that is given to each of us, following Jesus' example, and (c) we must not be ashamed of Jesus and His words, but rather, we must be willing to lay down our lives for Jesus and the gospel. The apostle Paul's confession is: "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news (gospel) of God's grace" (Acts 20:24, Korean Modern Bible).

Silent Witnesses of Jesus Walking the Path of Suffering

Many women followed Jesus from Galilee to the hill of Golgotha, a path known as the "Way of Sorrows" (Latin: Via Dolorosa), which is approximately 1.2 km (0.7 miles) long.

They watched from a distance as Jesus cried out loudly from the cross and breathed His last.

Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the wife of Zebedee (Matthew 27:50, 55-56).

These women helped provide for the needs of the disciples and Jesus with their own resources and followed Jesus to hear the gospel of the kingdom (Luke 8:2-3).

Truly, their devoted efforts and love for Jesus were such that they were willing to face death.

True, complete love is the way to overcome fear (1 John 4:18).

When Jesus was arrested, the disciples, who had promised to follow Him even to death, all fled (Matthew 26:57), and even Peter, who had claimed to be the most zealous, denied Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75).

Amid all this, the women who had supported Jesus' needs during His ministry in Galilee remained faithful, accompanying Him on His final journey to Jerusalem.

They overcame all their fear with perfect love and watched His agonizing final moments with hearts full of grief.

Indeed, these women were hidden servants of Jesus, silent witnesses to His life and death.

(Chokmah).

Even the demons know Jesus well ...

Even though it was late in the day, when people brought all those suffering from sickness and demonic possession to Jesus, He healed many suffering from various diseases and cast out demons. However, what is interesting is that Jesus did not allow the demons to speak because they knew Him well (Mark 1:32-34).

The first interesting point is that the many people suffering from various diseases did not know Jesus well. They had only heard of Him (v. 28) and came to Him. They likely saw Jesus as someone with the power to make unclean spirits obey or to heal people possessed by unclean spirits (vv. 23-27). From my perspective, if Christians suffering from various diseases come to know Jesus more deeply through their sickness and make precious confessions of faith about Him, that sickness can be considered a blessing to them.

The second interesting point is that the demons knew Jesus well (v. 34). While the Jewish high priests declared that Jesus must be crucified for blasphemy because He was called the Son of God, the demons knew that Jesus was the Son of God (Mark 3:11) and the Christ (Luke 4:41). James 2:19 says that even the demons believe that God is one and tremble. Chokmah explains: 'Most people, including the Jewish religious leaders, did not yet know that Jesus was the Son of God, but the demons, with their sharp spiritual perception, knew very well that Jesus was the Son of God (Luke 4:41). In fact, demons, as intellectual beings, understood the divinity of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:24), their own fate (8:29), and the plan of salvation (James 2:19), and they had a well-developed intellectual system of their own (1 Timothy 4:1-3)' (Chokmah).

The last interesting point is that Jesus did not allow the demons to speak (Mark 1:34). The reason was that the demons knew Him well. Chokmah explains: 'What would have happened if Jesus had allowed or ignored the words of the demons? Perhaps they would have openly shouted, as in verse 24, 'You are the Holy One of God.' Jesus knew that the demons recognized His divine nature, but He forbade them from revealing this fact to the people. In truth, Jesus wanted to first show through His words and actions what kind of Messiah He was—different from the common concept of the Messiah at that time. Furthermore, Jesus wanted His existence to be spread to the world only through the mouths of His redeemed people (Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8). Most importantly, Jesus required silence because the time had not yet come to openly reveal His identity (Chokmah).

**The reason is that Jesus' twofold commandment is the
commandment of the Kingdom of Heaven
(the new heaven and the new earth).**

The Pharisees, who tested Jesus with cunning intentions to trap Him,
and the Sadducees, who misunderstood
due to their ignorance of the Scriptures and God's power,
were ultimately silenced by Jesus' words.

As a result, both the Pharisees and the Sadducees gathered together
(Matthew 22:21, 34).

Then, one of them, an expert in the Law, tested Jesus by asking,
"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law of Moses?" (vv. 36).

Jesus answered:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the greatest and most important commandment.

The second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commandments" (vv. 37-40).

Though the expert in the Law asked Jesus

which commandment in the Law of Moses was the greatest,

Jesus responded that "all the teachings of the Law and the Prophets" are
based on His twofold commandment of loving God and loving one's neighbor.

As I meditate on this passage,

I see that in the Old Testament (the Old Covenant),

the Ten Commandments of Moses were regarded as the most important.

However, in the New Testament (the New Covenant),

Jesus emphasized that the most important commandments are

"Love for God"

(which corresponds to the first four commandments of Moses)

and "Love for one's neighbor"

(which corresponds to the last six commandments of Moses).

The reason is that Jesus' twofold commandment is

the commandment of the Kingdom of Heaven—

the new heaven and the new earth.

How can I not praise the great love of God?

Jesus was nailed to the cross from noon until 3 p.m.
Around 3 p.m., He cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?"
which means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
(Matthew 27:45-46). As I meditate on these words,
I am reminded not only of the physical agony Jesus endured for three hours
on the cross to bear and atone for my (our) sins,
but also of the unimaginable anguish He suffered
when He was forsaken by His beloved Father.
Then, Matthew 12:40 came to my mind:
"Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights,
so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights."
Jesus, the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being
(Hebrews 1:3), who sat on a throne in heaven (Revelation 4:2),
came down to this lowly world, born in the flesh without sin
["Christ, who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21)],
laid in a manger after birth (Luke 2:15),
and after 33 years, was crucified for three hours.
Having been forsaken by the Father and having died,
He remained "in the depths" (Jonah 2:3),
confined in the earth for three days (Ref: Jonah 2:6).
As I reflect on this, I am overwhelmed by the truth that because of Him,
I (we) now have eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven.
My heart cannot help but sing: "How can I keep from singing?"
(Hymn "My Life Flows Rich in Love and Grace").
"The Love of God is Greater."

I pray that they may be silenced.

I pray that God may grant wisdom to the true disciples of Jesus,
so that they may wisely answer the cunning questions
of church members like the Pharisees— those who, with deceitful intent,
test and seek to bring them down—thus silencing them (Ref: Matthew 22:17-22).

They were tempting Jesus to live rather than die on the cross.

As Jesus was being crucified,
passersby shook their heads and mocked Him,
saying, “You who said you would destroy the temple
and rebuild it in three days, save yourself!
If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!”
The chief priests, along with the teachers of the law and the elders, also
mocked Him, saying, “He saved others, but he cannot save himself!
He is the King of Israel—let him come down from the cross now,
and we will believe in him.
He trusts in God and claims to be God’s Son;
if God delights in him, let Him save him now.”
Even the criminals who were crucified with Him
hurled insults at Him in the same way
(Matthew 27:38-44).

As I meditate on this passage,
I realize that just as Jesus was tested by the devil
before beginning His public ministry (Matthew 4:1-11),
He was also tested while hanging on the cross by the devil’s servants:
The passersby, the chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders,
the two criminals crucified alongside Him.
The essence of this test can be summed up in one phrase: “Save yourself!”
In other words, they were tempting Jesus
not to die on the cross but to save His own life.
If we face such a test and, like the apostle Peter, fall into Satan’s temptation—
thinking not of God’s concerns but of human concerns—
we will refuse to take up our cross and seek to save our own lives.
However, if we are filled with the Holy Spirit
and set our minds on the things of God,
we will obey Jesus’ words, take up our cross,
follow Him, and surrender our lives for His sake.
Jesus said: “Whoever wants to save their life will lose it,
but whoever loses their life for my sake will find it”
(Ref.: Matthew 16:22-25, Korean Modern Bible).

Therefore, we must stay awake and be prepared.

No one knows the day or the hour of Jesus' return—
only God the Father knows.

When Jesus comes again, the world will be like the days of Noah.

Before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying
and being given in marriage, right up until the day Noah entered the ark.

They had no idea what was coming
until the flood came and swept them all away.

In the same way, it will be when Jesus returns.

Therefore, we must stay awake and be prepared.

The reason is that Jesus will come again at an hour we do not expect
(Ref.: Matthew 24:36-39, 42-44).

The Lord's words, "Stay awake," come to my mind.

As the bridegroom was delayed, both the foolish virgins—
who had lamps but no oil—and the wise virgins—
who had filled their lamps with oil—
became drowsy and fell asleep
(Matthew 25:1-5).

As I meditate on this passage,
the Lord's command, "Stay awake," comes to my mind:

"Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know
on what day your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42).

"Watch therefore, for you know
neither the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).

"Be on guard, keep awake.

For you do not know when the time will come" (Mark 13:33).

"Be always on the watch, and pray
that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen,
and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

“As if I were a robber...”

When Judas Iscariot, who was to betray Jesus,
came to Jesus with a large crowd of us
sent by the chief priests and elders,
the crowd came with swords and clubs
(Matthew 26:46-47, Korean Modern Bible).

Jesus looked at them and said,
“Are you coming out with swords and clubs
to arrest me as if I were a robber?”
(v. 55, Korean Modern Bible).

When I think about how Jesus,
who was not a robber, was treated like a robber,
I wondered if the chief priests and elders,
who were the masterminds of the crowd,
perhaps thought of Jesus as a robber.
So in the end, they took Jesus to Pilate,
the Roman governor, and accused him
(Luke 23:1-2).

They manipulated the crowd to
“Crucify him! They cried out, “Crucify him!” (v. 21)
Jesus was crucified with two real “thieves”
(Matthew 27:38).

In the midst of all this, Jesus, the Savior,
said to one of the two thieves, “Truly I tell you,
Today you will be with me in paradise”
(Luke 23:43, Korean Modern Bible).

“One thing I have asked of the Lord, I will seek after ...”

The simple meaning of the word "plead" is "to earnestly request" (Internet). While reading Mark 5, I noticed that the word "plead" appears five times: The unclean spirits pleaded with Jesus not to send them out of the region of Gerasa (Mark 5:10, Korean Modern Bible). The unclean spirits pleaded with Jesus, saying, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to enter them." (Mark 5:12). The people of Gerasa pleaded with Jesus to leave their region (Mark 5:17, Korean Modern Bible). The man who had been possessed by demons and was healed by Jesus pleaded to go with Him (Mark 5:18, Korean Modern Bible). Jairus, a synagogue leader, fell at Jesus' feet and pleaded, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and lay Your hands on her so that she may be healed and live." (Mark 5:22-23, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on these five instances of pleading, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) Jesus allowed the two requests of the unclean spirits. As a result, the unclean spirits came out and entered a herd of pigs, nearly 2,000 pigs, which rushed down a steep bank into the sea and drowned (Mark 5:13). It is important to note that it was not the evil spirits that drowned in the sea, but the pigs, which have no souls. Although the reason the many demons [whose name, "Legion," refers to their great number (v. 9)] pleaded with Jesus not to send them out of the region of Gerasa (v. 1) is unclear, at least we know that Jesus commanded the unclean spirits to come out of the demon-possessed man (v. 8). As a result, the many demons left the man and entered the pigs, and almost 2,000 pigs drowned in the sea (v. 13). An interesting detail is that the demon-possessed man lived among the tombs (v. 3). This is intriguing because the unclean spirits were living in a man who resided in a cemetery, and eventually, through their request, entered into the pigs, causing them to drown. In short, unclean spirits are associated with death.
- (2) When the herdsmen saw the herd of nearly 2,000 pigs drown in the sea, they ran off and told the townspeople and villagers what had happened. The people came to see for themselves and, when they saw the man who had previously been possessed by a legion of demons sitting with clothes on and in his right mind before Jesus, they were afraid (vv. 14-15). After the people who had witnessed the event told others what had happened to the demon-possessed man and the pigs, they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region (vv. 16-17). Why did they plead with Jesus to leave? The reason was that they were greatly afraid of Him (v. 15). This fear, ignorance, and selfishness led them to ask Jesus to leave. In truth, they rejected the Lord of life because of their superstitious imaginations and materialistic desires (4:19) (Hokma). We, too, can easily reject the Lord. For example, if we harbor fear within us, we can reject Him. Even if we confess with our mouths that we love the Lord, if fear is in our hearts, we are not fully loving Him. We can know this because the Bible says, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18). If we do not fully love the Lord and are led by fear, we could deny Jesus just like the Apostle Peter did. The reason we deny Jesus is not only because of the fear inside us, but also

because of the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things (Mark 4:19). Because of these temptations, we can reject and deny Jesus, living as though He is not central to our lives.

- (3) Jesus, in response to their plea, got into a boat to leave the region, but the man who had been healed from demon possession begged Jesus to let him go with Him. However, Jesus did not allow him to come (5:18-19). The man who had been healed likely wanted to follow Jesus, perhaps to become His disciple and serve Him fully by walking alongside Him (Hokma). Despite this, Jesus refused his request and told him, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you" (v. 19, Korean Modern Bible). So, the man went and began to tell everyone in the Decapolis region about the great things Jesus had done for him, and all who heard it were amazed (v. 20). Reflecting on how Jesus granted the demons' request but did not grant the healed man's, the words from Romans 9:20-21 come to mind (Korean Modern Bible): "But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?" We learn a lesson in humility and submission to God's sovereign will, understanding that we must obey the Lord's command without hesitation. Just as the healed man obeyed Jesus' command and returned to tell his family what the Lord had done for him, we too must first go back to our families and share with them how the Lord has shown mercy to us. Afterward, we should share this testimony with our church family, friends, and all around us.
- (4) I can somewhat understand the feelings of Jairus, the synagogue leader, who fell at Jesus' feet and begged, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and lay Your hands on her so that she will be healed and live" (Mark 5:22-23, Korean Modern Bible). This is because I too pleaded with the Lord for a miracle to save my firstborn child, Charis, who was in the hospital's intensive care unit and was dying. Furthermore, when one of my beloved children was suffering from a mental illness, the Holy Spirit reminded me of the Apostle Peter's cry when he was sinking in the water, prompting me to kneel down on the floor and cry out, "Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30). However, the result was that my firstborn, Charis, did not survive and passed away in my arms (fell asleep), while the other daughter was saved by the Lord, fulfilling the promise He gave me in 1 Peter 5:10, a word He is still fulfilling today: "After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you" (Korean Modern Bible).
- (5) "One thing I ask of the LORD, this do I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon his beauty and meditate on him in his temple" (Psalms 27:4, Korean Modern Bible).

“I am willing. Be cleansed.”

When a leper came to Jesus, knelt before Him, and begged, "If You are willing, You can make me clean," Jesus, moved with compassion, reached out and touched him, saying, "I am willing. Be cleansed." Immediately, the leprosy left him (Mark 1:40-42, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) Just as Jesus had compassion on the leper who begged on his knees for healing, I also kneel before the Lord, asking Him to have compassion on me, a spiritual leper, and continue to cleanse me (Ref.: To feel physical pain but not feel the pain of conscience, not realizing one's sin, is spiritual leprosy). Additionally, I pray that the Lord will have mercy on our country, South Korea.
- (2) Just as Jesus reached out His hand to the leper, I pray that when we are weary, exhausted, discouraged, and unable to rise, the Lord will "quietly draw near," extending His mighty right hand to hold our hand and speak to us, lifting us up again (Ref.: Gospel song "You Are My Beloved Son").
- (3) Just as Jesus said to the leper, "I am willing," when we come to the Lord on our knees and pray for the healing of our loved ones who are suffering, may we experience the deep love of the Lord through His words, "I am willing," and through this, may we truly feel His great love.
- (4) I pray that as the Lord hears the earnest prayers of His suffering children, He will say, "I am willing. Be clean," and that their illnesses will be healed immediately. However, even if "He does not," with faith [Ref.: "The 'Even if He does not' faith" (Daniel 3:18)], just as I led the funeral service for my beloved cousin, Christie, in 2024 and praised God—I will continue to praise “God is So Good and praise the greatness of the Lord and sing, "It is well with my soul" (Hymn “When Peace, Like a River, Attendeth My Way”) [Ref.: Video of the funeral service hymn for the late Sister Christie Hong (<https://youtu.be/EoaKVUkfUZw?si=umNqq8bO-8H1UVk6>)].

**“Have you believed because you have seen me?
Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

When Jesus died, the centurion and those who were guarding him with him were terrified when they saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, and they said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54, Korean Modern Bible). When Jesus was crucified, the chief priests, scribes, and elders who mocked him said that Jesus believed in God and that he “said that he was the Son of God” (vv. 41, 43), so it seems that the centurion and those who were guarding him with him knew that Jesus had said that he was the Son of God. However, when they saw the earthquake and the things that had happened when Jesus died, they said that Jesus was truly the Son of God. I am reminded of what Jesus said to Thomas, who said that he would not believe unless he saw the nail marks in Jesus’ palms, put his finger into the nail marks, and put his hand into Jesus’ side (John 20:25, Korean Modern Bible): “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (v. 29, Korean Modern Bible).

The lyrics of the gospel song, “You are my Son,” came to mind.

When I meditated on the words, “A voice came from heaven, saying, ‘You are my Son, in whom I love and am well pleased’” (Mark 1:11, Korean Modern Bible), the lyrics of the gospel song, “You are my Son,” came to mind: “When I am weary and weary, discouraged and have fallen and have no strength to get up, He quietly comes to me, takes my hand and speaks to me. When I am disappointed in myself and shed tears in my weakness and pain, He wipes my tears with His nail-scarred hands and speaks to me, ‘You are my Son, today I have become your Father. You are my Son, my beloved Son.’”

“Are you still sleeping?”

Jesus said to His three disciples

(Peter, John, and James),

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation,"

but when He saw that they were extremely tired and still asleep,

He asked, "Are you still sleeping?"

(Matthew 26:41, 45, Korean Modern Bible).

At this time, when the end of all things is near,

we must remain alert, sober,

and pray so that we do not fall into temptation

(Ref.: Matthew 26:41; 1 Peter 4:7).

Are we, perhaps, still "sleeping"?

(Ref.: Matthew 26:45, Korean Modern Bible)

Or, are we, perhaps, already in temptation,

crying out to God in the midst of a crisis,

like the prophet Jonah, who was "deeply asleep"?

(Ref.: Jonah 1:5, Korean Modern Bible)

'Bribes make innocent people guilty.'

When all the chief priests and elders
bound Jesus and handed Him over to the governor, Pilate,
Judas Iscariot, who had betrayed Jesus,
regretted what he had done when he saw that Jesus was sentenced to death.
He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying,
"I have sinned by betraying innocent blood; I have committed a great sin."
They replied, "What is that to us? It's your responsibility."
Then, Judas threw the silver coins into the temple and went out and hanged himself.
(Matthew 27:2-5, Korean Modern Bible).

Here is the passage from Deuteronomy 27:25 in the Korean New Translation:

"Anyone who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person is cursed.
All the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

Also, from Deuteronomy 16:19 in the Korean New Translation:

"... bribery... makes innocent people guilty."

Then I remember the words of Jesus:

"The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him,
but woe to the one who betrays the Son of Man!
It would be better for him if he had not been born."

(Matthew 26:24, Modern Korean Bible).

Whoever exalts themselves will be humbled, and whoever humbles themselves will be exalted.

The greatest among us must be the one who serves others,
and whoever exalts themselves will be humbled,
but whoever humbles themselves will be exalted.
(Ref.: Matthew 23:11-12, Korean Modern Bible).

There are times when silence is needed more than an answer.

Governor Pilate asked Jesus,
"Are you the King of the Jews?"
Jesus answered, "Yes, it is as you say,"
but when the chief priests and elders
brought accusations against Him,
He did not answer a word.
Then Pilate asked Him,
"Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?"
But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge,
to the great amazement of the governor.
(Matthew 27:11-14, Korean Modern Bible).
Why did Jesus, the King of the Jews,
not respond at all to the accusations
of the Jewish high priests and elders?
Even though Jesus heard all their testimony,
He did not answer a single word.
From the perspective of the Roman governor Pilate,
this must have seemed very strange.
When the false accusations of anti-Christians are made,
and there is no reply at all,
the world may indeed find it quite strange.
It seems that there are times
when silence is needed more than an answer.

"Do not be afraid; just believe."

When Jesus was speaking to the woman who had been suffering and bleeding for 12 years, saying, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace, and be freed from your suffering," people from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader, came and told him, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher anymore?"

When Jesus overheard this, He said to Jairus, "Do not be afraid; just believe" (Mark 5:25, 34-36, Korean Modern Bible).

Here are the lyrics from verse 3 and the refrain of the hymn, "Fear not, little flock":
"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 dark-ness and dawn.
Only believe, only believe; All things are possible, only believe;
Only believe, only believe; All things are possible, only believe."

The authoritative Word of God that the listeners could not help but be amazed by!

As Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee,
He called Simon and his brother Andrew, and James.
He then went with them to Capernaum,
where He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach.
His teaching was as one with authority, and the people were amazed
(Mark 1:16-22, Korean Modern Bible).

When I reflect on this passage, I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ,
the authoritative one, taught with God's authority (2 Peter 2:10, Modern Korean Bible)
and with authoritative words (Luke 4:31, Modern Korean Bible).

That is why the people who listened could not help but be amazed.

Here is a message from the Apostle Paul to Titus:

"Teach these things with authority, encourage and rebuke with authority,
so that no one will disregard you" (Titus 2:15, Korean Modern Bible).

**“Daughter, your faith has healed you.
Go in peace and be free from your disease.”**

When Jairus, the synagogue leader, begged, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and lay your hands on her so that she will be healed and live," Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around Him. Among the crowd was a woman who had been suffering from bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a lot under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better, her condition had only worsened. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind Him in the crowd and thought, "If I just touch His clothes, I will be healed." So, she touched His cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped, and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At that moment, Jesus realized that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" He kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at His feet, trembling with fear, and told Him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering" (Mark 5:22-34, Korean Modern Bible). When I reflect on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) The reason many people followed Jesus might have been because they wanted to see Him heal the sick miraculously (for example, seeing Jesus heal the daughter of the synagogue leader, Jairus, who was dying), or they might have been hoping that Jesus would heal them of their own illnesses (like the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years). Perhaps even today, among many people who attend church, there are some who follow Jesus for these reasons.

- (2) The woman who had been suffering and bleeding for twelve years seems to have had quite a bit of wealth. Because of this, she was able to spend twelve years searching for many doctors and receiving treatment with the desperate hope that her illness would be healed. However, the result was not what she had so desperately hoped for. Instead of being healed, she suffered even more, spent all her wealth, and her condition worsened. This would have certainly led her to feel a sense of despair and possibly gave up on hope. Even today, there are probably many people who, with the desperate hope of healing, seek out numerous doctors, enduring much suffering, only to see their condition worsen, not improve, and they may feel deeply disappointed and despairing. In such times, what should we do? I am reminded of the words from Psalms 42:5, 11, and 43:5: "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God."

- (3) What was the "news about Jesus" that the woman had heard? Given that she thought, "If I just touch Jesus' clothes, I will be healed," it seems that the news she heard was about Jesus healing the diseases of the sick. Because of this, she pushed through the crowd, following Jesus, and believed that if she could

only touch His clothes, she would be healed. So, she touched the hem of His garment. As a result, the moment she touched His clothes, her bleeding immediately stopped, and she felt that she was healed. When Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering," it shows that her belief that touching Jesus' clothes would heal her came from her faith in Him. Similarly, like her, we must also act on our faith in Jesus. Just as she touched Jesus' garment in faith, we too must translate our faith into action and "touch" His garment with our faith. Here are the lyrics from verse 3 of the hymn, "My Lord Has Garments so Wondrous Find: "His garments, too, were in cassia dipped, With healing in a touch; Each time my feet in some sin have slipped, He took me from its clutch. Out of the ivory palaces Into a world of woe, Only His great eternal love, Made my Savior go."

- (4) When reflecting on the clothes that Jesus wore, I remembered the passage from John 19:23-24 in the Korean Modern Bible: "The soldiers who crucified Jesus took His clothes, divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. But His tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So, they said to one another, 'Let's not tear it, but cast lots to see who will get it.' This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled which said, 'They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.' So, this is what the soldiers did." I also read this on the internet: "In the time of Jesus, clothes were essentially money. Because there was no weaving technology, every thread had to be made by hand. Each thread had to be woven by hand, one by one. Therefore, clothes were extremely valuable. Jesus was beaten with whips from early in the morning until about 9 a.m. His clothes were torn, and blood stained them. Thus, clothes were precious. There were four Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus. They were happy because they had extra income. After stripping Jesus of His clothes, they thought the clothes could be sold for enough to cover the cost of their drinking. They took Jesus' outer garment and divided it into four parts. Since it says that each soldier got a part, it's clear that there were four of them. The pieces of His garment were considered valuable, even though they were stained with blood because they could be cleaned. Now, biblical scholars interpret the division of Jesus' clothes into four parts as a symbol of the Gospel spreading to the four corners of the earth. There are no coincidences. It is God's providence. However, when they were about to remove His inner garment, the Roman soldiers were surprised. His inner garment was not just any piece of clothing. In the original Greek of the Gospel of John, it is referred to as 'chiton.' The word 'chiton' is remarkable." Although the weaving technology was not advanced in that era, it was all made from one piece. It was a garment woven in one continuous thread. The Bible says the same: "They took His tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom" (John 19:23). Such a garment is something an ordinary person could not wear. It was a garment only priests wore. ... The historian of Jesus' time, Josephus, recorded that this garment was worn by priests. This matches the Bible's account. The Bible confirms this. However, this garment was so valuable that it could not be divided. Therefore, it had to be kept in one piece to retain its full value. So, they cast lots to decide who would get it. Typically, outer garments are expensive, but undergarments are not so costly.

The Roman soldiers divided the outer garment, but they did not divide the inner garment. The Bible tells us that Jesus was wearing this chiton, this priestly garment, when He died on the cross. Why did Jesus wear this garment when He died on the cross? Jesus is a priest. He wore the chiton, the priestly garment. ... Jesus is the High Priest. The term "priest" in Latin is pontifex, which means "the one who bridges" or "the one who builds a bridge." Jesus became the mediator between God and people. He bridged the gap between God and humanity. ... So, when the Roman soldiers divided this garment, the veil that separated the Holy of Holies (where God dwells) from the Holy Place (where people are) was torn. As a result, we can now meet with God. Jesus is our mediator. That is why He wore the priestly garment and died (Internet).

- (5) When I meditate on the words Jesus spoke to the woman who touched His garment, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering," I earnestly wish that God would speak these words to His precious and beloved children who have been suffering from illness for many years, so that they may be freed from their sickness and restored to health.

(Verse 1) "Out of my bondage, sorrow and night, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come. Into Thy freedom, gladness and light, Jesus, I come to Thee. Out of my sickness into Thy health, Out of my want and into Thy wealth, Out of my sin and into Thyself, Jesus, I come to Thee." (Verse 4) "Out of the fear and dread of the tomb, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come. Into The joy and light of Thy home, Jesus, I come to Thee. Out of the depths of ruin untold, Into the peace of Thy sheltering fold, Ever Thy glorious face to behold, Jesus, I come to Thee" (Hymn "Out of My Bondage, Sorrow and Night," 1st and 4th verses).

**Just like the chief priests and the elders of the people who gathered
in the courtyard of the high priest Caiaphas' house
to secretly plot a way to capture and kill Jesus ...**

Just like the chief priests and the elders of the people who gathered in the courtyard of the high priest Caiaphas' house to secretly plot a way to capture and kill Jesus (Matthew 26:3-4, Korean Modern Bible), perhaps even now, there may be anti-senior pastor elders and deacons who are secretly meeting at the homes of church elders to discuss a way to cleverly remove the senior pastor. However, they might be waiting for the right moment to carry out their plans, perhaps fearing the members who support the senior pastor (Ref.: Matthew 26:5, Korean Modern Bible).

**While Mary Magdalene prepared for Jesus' burial, Jesus' disciples
prepared for the Passover as Jesus had instructed.**

While Mary Magdalene prepared for Jesus' burial, the disciples prepared for the Passover as Jesus had instructed them (Matthew 26:12, 19, Contemporary Bible). Jesus had clearly told His disciples, 'As you know, the Passover is in two days, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified' (Matthew 26:2, Contemporary Bible). However, despite this, they prepared for the Passover, not for Jesus' burial like Mary Magdalene. Reflecting on the disciples who were not prepared for the death of Jesus, the Passover Lamb, I learn the lesson to be prepared for Jesus' second coming, just as the wise five virgins were ready (Matthew 25:1-13).

First, everything must be restored (set right)!

This Wednesday morning, while reflecting on Matthew 17, I wrote this short meditation under the title 'The servant of the Lord, like John the Baptist, who prepares for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, sets everything right': 'The servant of the Lord, like John the Baptist, who prepares for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, sets everything right. However, the hypocrites with stubborn hearts, like the Pharisees, who refuse to be set right, will persecute that servant of the Lord. Therefore, the servant of the Lord who prepares for the second coming of Jesus will suffer (Ref.: Matthew 17:11-13, Korean Modern Bible). When reflecting on this short meditation, I thought to myself, 'As a servant of the Lord preparing for the second coming of Jesus, I must first restore (set right) everything.' And as I thought about it, I wondered, 'What is it that the Lord wants to restore (set right) through me, as He called me and anointed me as His servant (pastor)?' I hope to organize these thoughts as I write them down:

- (1) First of all, I believe that the Lord desires to restore (set right) me first. And the most urgent thing in the Lord's restoration (setting right) of me is repentance. The reason is that there is no restoration (setting right) without repentance. Among the things I must repent of, the most urgent are my stubborn heart that disobeys God's word and my hypocrisy. "Hover o'er me, Holy Spirit, Bathe my trembling heart and brow; Fill me with Thy hallowed presence, Come, O come and fill me now. Fill me now, fill me now, Jesus, come and fill me now; Fill me with Thy hallowed presence; Come, O come and fill me now" (Hymn "Hover O'er me, Holy Spirit," verse 1 and chorus).
- (2) In this process, I believe that what the Lord wants to restore (set right) through me is my family. As the head of my household, I must, through God's grace, repent and be restored (set right) and, in the process of my transformation, raise the beloved wife and children God has given me as a gift of grace (Ephesians 5:29; 6:4). I must nurture them with God's word, not only teaching the right way with my lips (Matthew 21:32), but also showing an example through my right life [living in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27)] and having a positive influence on them. Therefore, I pray that my family and I will walk the right path that the Lord walked, becoming people who are willing to lay down our lives for Jesus and the gospel (Mark 8:35).
- (3) The ultimate purpose of the restoration (setting right) of myself and my family is the restoration (setting right) of the Lord's church. Since the Lord, who is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), has promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18), I believe that my family, and all church members, should pray for the restoration (setting right) of the church they serve with faith, and long for the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about repentance. I pray that the Holy Spirit will not only break and melt our stubborn hearts, which are like a hammer and fire (Jeremiah 23:29), but also

pierce our consciences with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17), convicting us of our sins (1 Samuel 24:5; 2 Samuel 24:10), exposing our sins (Ephesians 5:11), and leading us to confess our sins (1 John 1:9). And I pray that the Holy Spirit will no longer let us conform to the pattern of this world, but transform our minds (Romans 12:2), enabling us to fulfill our role as the light and salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16).

“Even if everyone else abandons You, I will never abandon You.”

When Jesus was captured by the crowd armed with swords and clubs, fulfilling the prophecies of the prophets, His disciples, just as Jesus had quoted the prophecy from the Old Testament, deserted Him and fled (Matthew 26:31, 56, Korean Modern Bible; see also Zechariah 13:7). However, the apostle Peter, who had said, "Even if everyone else abandons You, I will never abandon You" (Matthew 26:33, Korean Modern Bible), followed Jesus at a distance and entered the courtyard of the high priest Caiaphas' house to see what would happen (v. 58). It seems that Peter initially fled but then returned and followed Jesus from a distance. And he denied knowing Jesus three times (Luke 22:57, 58, 60). Before he could finish his third denial, the rooster immediately crowed, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. At that moment, Peter remembered Jesus' words, "Before the rooster crows tonight, you will deny Me three times," and he went outside and wept bitterly (vv. 60-62). Jesus said: "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33, Korean Modern Bible).

“Why this waste?”

When Jesus' disciples saw a woman
bringing an expensive jar of perfume and pouring it on Jesus' head
while He was sitting at the table in the house of Simon the leper,
they were indignant and said, "Why this waste?
This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor!"
(Matthew 26:6-9, Korean Modern Bible).

As I meditate on this passage,
I think of a young missionary named Jim Elliot.
At the age of 29, he was martyred along with four fellow missionaries in Ecuador
while working to evangelize the people.
When the incident was reported in the American newspapers at that time,
it was accompanied by the heading: "What an unnecessary waste!"
(Internet).

Was the death of missionary Jim Elliot truly a waste?
Was the precious jar of perfume poured on Jesus' head
by the woman preparing His burial a waste?
Would it have been better to sell the perfume at a high price
and give the money to the poor?
One of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and told them
that he would hand Jesus over to them for thirty pieces of silver (vv. 14-15).
Jesus, knowing His disciples' thoughts, said,
"She has done a beautiful thing to Me" (v. 10, Korean Modern Bible).
The lyrics of hymn “Master, no Offering Costly and Sweet”:
(Verse 1) Following Mary Magdalene, who poured the expensive perfume on You,
I will offer my fragrant sacrifice to You, O Lord of love.
(Verse 4) As the twilight of life approaches and the labor of this earth ends,
I will serve You and peacefully go, O Lord of love.

Jesus walking on the water

After witnessing Jesus' miracle of feeding about 5,000 men with two fish and five loaves of bread (Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:15-21; Luke 9:11-17; John 6:1-15), the crowd, realizing that Jesus had performed such a miracle, wanted to force Him to become their king. Knowing this, Jesus sent the crowd away and went up to a mountain by Himself to pray, remaining there alone even as the evening came (Mark 6:46; Matthew 14:23; John 6:15, Korean Modern Bible). As evening fell, the disciples went down to the shore, boarded a boat, and started crossing over to the other side, to Capernaum. It was already dark, but Jesus had not yet returned to them. At that time, a strong wind began to blow, and the waves started to rise (John 6:16-18). As a result, the boat the disciples were in was in the middle of the sea, and the wind was tossing it around, making it hard for the disciples to row (Mark 6:48; Matthew 14:24). When they had rowed about 4-5 kilometers (John 6:19, Korean Modern Bible), Jesus, who had been alone on land, saw the disciples struggling with the oars and walking on the water, He went out to them around 4 a.m. The disciples thought He was a ghost and were terrified, crying out, "It's a ghost!" (Mark 6:49; Matthew 14:26). Then Jesus immediately spoke to them, saying, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). At that point, Peter responded, "Lord, if it's really You, tell me to come to You on the water." Jesus said, "Come." So, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he became afraid and began to sink, crying out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out His hand, caught him, and said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down (Matthew 14:28-32). The disciples were amazed and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly, You are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33, Korean Modern Bible). Reflecting on this passage, including Mark 6:45-52, Matthew 14:22-33, and John 6:15-21, I would like to consider a few thoughts.

- (1) The reason the crowd, who witnessed Jesus' miracle of feeding about 5,000 men with two fish and five loaves of bread, wanted to force Him to be their king (John 6:15) is that, from their perspective, if they made Jesus, who had such amazing power, their king, they could gain political freedom from the ruling Roman government, economic prosperity, and social justice, expecting a better life in all aspects (Ref: Se-yoon Kim).
- (2) After Jesus knew their intentions, He sent the crowd away, and after that, He went up to the mountain to pray and stayed there alone, even though it was already getting dark (Mark 6:46; Matthew 14:23; John 6:15). The lesson from this is that, although many people may want to elevate us to fulfill their worldly, physical, and social needs, we should follow Jesus' example by retreating to a quiet place to pray to God, saying, "Not my will, but Your will be done" (Mark 14:36, Korean Modern Bible). Even though we might desire God to take away the "cup of suffering" that He has given us, and wish to be exalted as many people want, if God's will is for us to receive that cup of suffering, we should be obedient to His will and, like Jesus, come before God and pray.

- (3) When I meditate on the passage that says, "The strong wind blew, and the waves began to rise" (John 6:16-18, Korean Modern Bible), the boat the disciples were in was in the middle of the sea, and because the wind was so strong, the boat was being battered by the waves, and the disciples were struggling to row the boat (Mark 6:48; Matthew 14:24), I am reminded of the story of the prophet Jonah. He was trying to escape from God by disobeying God's word, and the ship he was on was almost broken apart by a great wind that God caused to blow over the sea, resulting in a violent storm (Jonah 1:1-4). Eventually, Jonah, who was chosen by lot, admitted to the unbelieving captain and sailors that he was fleeing from God. As the storm grew more fierce, the sailors asked Jonah, "What should we do to make the sea calm for us?" Jonah replied, "Throw me into the sea." However, the sailors tried their best to row the boat to the land, but because the waves kept growing fiercer, they could not do it (vv. 10-13). Right now, the boat we are in is in the middle of this world. However, the sinful winds of this world are raging, and the boat we are in is being battered by the waves of sin. We are doing our best to row, but the waves of this sinful world keep growing stronger, and we cannot bring our boat to the land. We no longer have the strength to row. Yet, the fierce storm continues. Therefore, at this moment, we have lost all hope for salvation (Acts 27:20). We are gradually losing hope that we will survive (v. 20, Korean New Translation).
- (4) Jesus is watching our situation (Ref.: Mark 6:48). And Jesus comes to us (Ref.: Matthew 14:25). When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, thinking He was a ghost, they were all afraid and cried out, "It's a ghost!" (v. 49; Matthew 14:26). But Jesus said to them, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). To us, who are afraid, Jesus says, "Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).
- (5) In fact, just as Jesus promised in Isaiah 41:10, He got out of the boat, walked on the water, and when Peter began to fear the waves and started sinking, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out His hand and caught him (He saved him) (Matthew 14:29-31, Korean Modern Bible).
- (6) And Jesus said to Peter, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31, Korean Modern Bible). But to the doubting Thomas, He said, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27, Korean Modern Bible).
- (7) As Jesus got into the boat with Peter, who had little faith and doubted (Matthew 14:31-32), the wind immediately stopped (Mark 6:51), which makes me think of the time when the sailors threw Jonah into the sea, and the raging sea instantly became calm (Jonah 1:15). Even if the strong winds of life cause a great storm, turning the sea we are heading toward into a raging sea that threatens the boat we are in, we can sing with confidence, "Though tempests may threaten the craft and the crew, And wide gape the jaws of the deep for me, too, With Christ at the oar I am safe in His will, And Jesus my Savior is my

Pilot still. I nothing can fear! I nothing can dread! For Jesus keeps watch here, and by Him I'm led. My seas may be rough, but when voy'ges are past," (Hymn "With Christ as My piolet," verse 2 and refrain).

- (8) Jesus' disciples were greatly amazed and didn't know what to do, and the reason for this was that they had not understood the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, and instead, their hearts had become hardened (Mark 6:46-52). The reason our hearts become hardened is due to "dissipation, drunkenness, and the worries of life." Therefore, Luke 21:34 says: "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap."
- (9) When Jesus got into the boat with Peter and the wind stopped, the disciples in the boat worshiped Jesus, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflect on this confession of faith, I think of the confessions of Nathanael and Thomas in the Gospel of John: (Nathanael) "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel" (John 1:49, Korean Modern Bible), (Thomas) "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28, Korean Modern Bible).

Pharisee-like church members can certainly exist within the church.

I believe there can be church members who, like the Pharisees,
gather to plot and entrap sincere followers of Jesus,
stirring up people against them
(Ref.: Matthew 22:15, Korean Modern Bible).

There will certainly come a time for accounting.

The time will come when the Lord will settle accounts for the "talents" He has given to each of us "according to our ability." Therefore, like the ones who received five talents and two talents, we must "go and work with them" to earn and multiply, not like the one who received one talent and "went and buried the master's money in the ground" (Ref.: Matthew 25:15-19, 24, Korean Modern Bible).

Jesus, betrayed and forsaken

At the Last Supper, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." And on the Mount of Olives, He also said, "Tonight, all of you will fall away on account of me. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee" (Matthew 26:21, 31-32, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this, I realize that during the Last Supper, Jesus knew that Judas Iscariot would betray Him, and when He went to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, He knew that all His disciples would forsake Him. Ultimately, Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot and forsaken by all His disciples. Then, on the cross, Jesus was forsaken by God the Father (Matthew 27:46), the God of love (1 John 4:8, 16). As I reflect on Jesus being betrayed and forsaken, the words of a hymn come to mind: "Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine" (Hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," 4th verse).

Clearly, God's Word has been sown in our hearts.

Through those who proclaim the Word,
God's message has been sown in our hearts.
But sometimes, Satan comes and takes away the Word
that was sown in our hearts.
At other times, we receive the Word with joy,
but we are unable to keep it deeply in our hearts.
When trials or persecutions come because of the Word,
we may fall away quickly.
Sometimes, we hear God's Word,
but the worries of this world,
the temptation of wealth, and other desires come in
and choke the Word, preventing it from bearing fruit.
What we hope and desire is that
as we listen to and accept God's Word,
we will bear fruit—30, 60, or 100 times what was sown
(Ref.: Mark 4:14-20, Korean Modern Bible).

'Heralds of Light, Arise! Shine!'

After telling Jairus, the synagogue ruler, "Do not be afraid; just believe," Jesus allowed only Peter, James, and his brother John to follow Him, and they went with Him to Jairus' house. When He saw the commotion and people weeping and wailing loudly, He went inside and said, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." At this, they laughed at Him. After He put them all out, He took the child's parents and the disciples who were with Him and went into the room where the girl was. He took her by the hand and said, "Talitha koum!" which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around. At this, they were completely astonished. Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about this and told them to give her something to eat (Mark 5:36-43). As I reflect on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) As I reflect on the passage where Jesus took only Peter, James, and John with Him to the house of Jairus, I am reminded that later, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus also took only Peter, James, and John with Him (Mark 9:2). Additionally, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He took only Peter, James, and John apart from the others and said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch" (Mark 14:32-34, Korean Modern Bible).
- (2) As I meditate on the words of Jesus, who, upon entering the house of Jairus, told those who were weeping and wailing, "The child is not dead but asleep," I am reminded of His words to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up" (John 11:11, Korean Modern Bible). At that time, the disciples thought that Lazarus was merely resting, so they said, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." But Jesus was speaking of Lazarus's death (vv. 12-13). So, Jesus clearly told them, "Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him now" (vv. 14-15, Korean Modern Bible). He then went to Bethany and raised Lazarus, who had been dead for four days (vv. 17-18, 43-44). This reminds me of the passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, which says: "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death ... so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him ..." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14).
- (3) As I meditate on the words of Jesus, who took the hand of the synagogue leader Jairus's dead daughter and said, "Talitha koum!" (meaning, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"), and how the 12-year-old girl immediately rose and walked, I am reminded of Isaiah 60:1: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you." I also recalled the lyrics of the hymn "Heralds of the Light, Be Swift," specifically the first verse and chorus: "Heralds of the light, be swift, haste your going; Shatter

the fetters of night. Peoples still without the truth wait unknowing. Beam forth the Gospel of Light. Heralds of Light, speed away! Let shine the bright Gospel ray. End the night of sin, Let the brightness in! Heralds of light, speed the day."

“Rabbi, is it I?”

While Jesus was eating with the twelve disciples, he said to them, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” Then the disciples were very sad and each one of them said to him, “Surely not I, Lord?” But only Judas Iscariot said, “Rabbi, is it I?” (Matthew 26:20-25, Korean Modern Bible). Why did Judas ask Jesus that? Was it because he was pricked by his conscience? If so, shouldn’t he have confessed, “Rabbi, it is I,” rather than asking, “Rabbi, is it I?” How could Jesus “give thanks” for the bread in such a situation? (v. 26) How could Jesus “give thanks” when he knew that he would be betrayed by his own disciple, Judas Iscariot (as it seemed he had already done) and be crucified? I would like to confess my praise with faith by modifying the second half of the lyrics of the hymn “Nearer, My God, to Thee” verse 4 like this: ‘... until the time of my death, always giving thanks in prayer, I desire to draw nearer to the Lord.’

They will try to deceive even the chosen ones.

At the end of the world, false Christs and false prophets will arise,
performing great miracles and astonishing signs,
in an attempt to deceive even the chosen ones.

Therefore, if anyone says to us,
"The Christ is here," or "The Christ is there,"
we must not believe them
(Ref.: Matthew 24:23-26, Korean Modern Bible).

As a preacher, I must boldly proclaim God's authoritative word with faith ...

When Jesus taught with authority, people were amazed.
When Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit inside a man and said,
"Be silent, and come out of him," the unclean spirit convulsed the man
and shrieked loudly as it came out. Everyone was amazed and said,
"What is this? A new teaching with authority!
Even the unclean spirits obey His command!"

And soon, the news about Jesus spread throughout all of Galilee
(Mark 1:22-28, Korean Modern Bible).

As I reflect on this passage, I learn that as a preacher,
I must proclaim God's authoritative word with faith,
believing that, just as the power of God's word made even unclean spirits obey,
it can also make even hardened hearts obey. I must boldly declare this with faith.

Just as the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness ...

Just as the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness (Mark 1:12),
the Holy Spirit gives grace to servants at the right time (Hebrews 4:16).
I believe the Holy Spirit will also drive us into the wilderness,
where He will comfort us with His word (Hosea 2:14).

I pray that the amazing work of the Holy Spirit's salvation will take place.

I pray that the amazing work of the Holy Spirit's salvation will take place,
that through us, people will hear the gospel of Jesus Christ,
come to the Lord, confess their sins, and be baptized.
I pray for this incredible work of salvation to happen
(Mark 1:1, 5).

What is the point of boasting about the temple building?

What is the point of boasting about the temple building?
The temple building we see will not have even one stone properly placed on it,
and it will all fall down (Ref.: Matthew 24:1-2, Korean Modern Bible).

All the nations of the earth will mourn.

After that time of suffering,
the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,
the stars will fall, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.
Then the sign of Jesus' coming will appear in the sky,
and all the nations of the earth will mourn.
They will see Jesus coming on a cloud with power and great glory.
Jesus will send his angels with a loud trumpet sound,
and they will gather his chosen ones from the four winds,
from one end of heaven to the other
(Matthew 24:29-31, Korean Modern Bible).

**‘For then there will be great suffering such as has not occurred
since the creation of the world, no, nor ever will occur again.’**

‘For then there will be great suffering such as has not occurred
since the creation of the world, no, nor ever will occur again.
If the time of this suffering had not been shortened, no one would survive.
But for the sake of the elect it will be shortened’
(Matthew 24:21-22, Korean Modern Bible).

**“Be alert and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.
The spirit is strong, but the flesh is weak.”**

The Jews who shouted that Jesus should be sentenced to death spat on His face,
struck Him with their fists, and slapped Him, mocking,

"Christ, who hit You? Guess who it was."

However, when Peter, a disciple of Jesus, was sitting in the courtyard,
a servant girl came up and said,

"You are also one of those who are with Jesus from Galilee, aren't you?"

Peter replied, "I don't know what you're talking about,"
and denied Jesus in front of everyone.

Then, when Peter went out to the gateway,
another servant girl saw him and said to the people there,

"This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." Peter denied it,
even swearing, saying, "I don't know the man!"

A little later, those who were standing there came up to Peter and said,
"Surely you are one of them, for your accent betrays you."

Then Peter began to call down curses on himself and swore to them,
"I do not know the man!"

At that moment, the rooster crowed,
and Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken,
"Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times."

He went outside and wept bitterly
(Matthew 26:66-75, Korean Modern Bible).

When Jesus was deeply distressed in the Garden of Gethsemane,
to the point of feeling as though He might die, He told Peter, John, and James,
"Stay here and keep watch with Me." But they all fell asleep.

At that moment, Jesus said to Peter,
"Couldn't you keep watch with Me for one hour?"

(vv. 38-40, Korean Modern Bible).

Now, as the Jews spat on Jesus' face, struck Him with their fists,
and slapped Him while mocking Him, Peter denied Jesus three times.

These words of Jesus come to mind again:

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"

(v. 41, Korean Modern Bible).

Even if our beloved family members are suffering to the point of death ...

In His great agony, as He neared death,
Jesus fell with His face to the ground
and prayed to God the Father,
saying, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.
Yet, not as I will, but as You will."
When He returned to His three disciples—Peter, James, and John—
He found them asleep, having been unable
to stay awake and pray with Him for even one hour.
Jesus said to them,
"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.
The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
Despite this, after going away again
to pray and plead with God the Father,
Jesus returned to find them "so very tired and asleep again"
(Matthew 26:38-43, Korean Modern Bible).
Even when a dearly loved family member
is in agony to the point of death,
we may deeply desire to pray earnestly for them,
yet when we are extremely tired,
we find ourselves falling asleep while praying.
This shows that even the deep love for a family member
can lead us into temptation due to our weaknesses.

The importance of promises

When the news of Jesus spread widely, even reaching the ears of King Herod, people began saying that Jesus was "the resurrected John the Baptist" and that this was why He had the power to perform miracles. Herod himself said, "The John whom I beheaded has been raised from the dead" (Mark 6:14-16, Korean Modern Bible). From their perspective, the reason they thought this way was because Jesus had been healing the sick and casting out demons, performing miraculous signs. In their view, anyone who possessed such power must have had a connection with someone like the prophet Elijah (v. 15), or perhaps someone more recent, such as John the Baptist. Especially from King Herod's perspective, upon hearing the rumors about Jesus, when he said that John, whom he had beheaded, had come back to life, it was inevitable that memories of his previous encounters with John would resurface. These memories included the rebuke John had given him for marrying his brother Philip's wife, Herodias, and saying that it was wrong (vv. 17-18). As a result, Herodias harbored a grudge and sought to have John killed, but because Herod feared John, thinking of him as a righteous and holy man, he had protected him and did not allow this to happen (Mark 6:19). An interesting detail is that, despite his discomfort at hearing John's rebukes, King Herod still enjoyed listening to him (v. 19). How could someone who was rebuked for their wrongdoing still take pleasure in listening to the person who had rebuked them? Amid this situation, "a good opportunity" arose for Herodias. This "good opportunity" came when "Herod held a banquet on his birthday, inviting the nobles, the military commanders, and the prominent men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias entered and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, 'Ask me for anything you want, and I will give it to you. I will even give you up to half my kingdom'" (vv. 21-22). The girl then asked her mother, "What should I ask for?" (v. 24). Just as Herodias, who sought to destroy John, was waiting for the "good opportunity," Satan's agents, like Herodias, are always looking for chances to attack and bring us down. For example, during the reign of King Darius, there were three administrators, and the other two, who were clever and excelled in all matters, looked for a way to accuse Daniel, the prime minister, of doing something wrong in his official duties (Daniel 6:1-4). This reminds me of the latter half of Genesis 4:7: "... If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it" (Korean Modern Bible).

When Herodias answered her daughter, who came to her and asked, "What should I ask for?", she said, "Ask for the head of John the Baptist." The daughter hurried to the king and said, "I want you to give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter right now" (Mark 6:24-25, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflected on this passage, I was reminded of the story in the book of Esther, where King Xerxes said to Esther three times: "What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given to you" (Esther 5:3), "What is your petition? It will be given to you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted" (6:6), "What is your request? It will be given to you. What is your petition? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted" (7:2). But how starkly different are the women Esther and Herodias! In brief, Esther is a precious and noble daughter of God, while Herodias is the wicked daughter

of Satan. When I think of Herodias, the evil daughter of Satan, who is controlled by her mother and obediently follows her mother's commands without question, I feel deep sympathy for her daughter. I wonder how many daughters in this world are enduring such suffering in relationships with their mothers, similar to the one between Herodias and her daughter.

When King Herod heard the request, "Give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter right now," he was deeply distressed. However, because of the promise he had made and the guests sitting at the banquet, he could not refuse the girl's request. He immediately sent the executioner to behead John and bring his head on a platter. The executioner went to the prison, beheaded John, brought the head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. She then gave it to her mother, Herodias (Mark 6:25-28). When John's disciples heard this news, they took his body, buried it, and mourned (v. 29). As I meditated on this passage, I reflected on the importance of promises. King Herod, though deeply distressed, could not break the promise he made to Herodias' daughter and kept it. Of course, the reason was also due to the guests sitting at the banquet (v. 26). However, Herod had previously been deeply distressed when he listened to John's words but enjoyed hearing them (v. 19). When comparing his distress at hearing John's words to the great distress he felt at hearing the request for John's head, it seems clear that King Herod was more deeply distressed by the words of Herodias, the daughter of Satan, spoken through her daughter, than by the words of God through John. Therefore, he chose to obey the words of Satan rather than God's words. I believe this is not only true of King Herod but also of us. We, too, hear the words of God, who is truth, and the words of Satan, the father of lies. And like King Herod, we can sometimes be deeply distressed. However, in the end, rather than obeying God's word when we are convicted by it, we often, in our distress, listen to Satan's lies and are deceived by them, following them. The number of times we have done this might be countless.

Three things that happened when Jesus died

When Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed His last, three events occurred: (1) the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom, (2) the earth shook and rocks split, and (3) the tombs broke open and many of the dead saints were raised to life and came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 27:50-53, Korean Modern Bible).

- (1) The tearing of the temple curtain from top to bottom symbolizes that, through the torn body of Jesus, the great sacrifice, a new and living way was opened for us to approach God (Hebrews 10:19-20). This means that any sinner, relying on Jesus' atoning death, can boldly come directly to God (Hokma).
- (2) The simultaneous events of the tearing of the temple curtain and the shaking of the earth with splitting rocks signify the presence of God as the righteous Judge, as a result of the death of Jesus, His only Son (Psalms 18:7; Isaiah 5:25; Joel 2:10). For those who accept Jesus' death by faith, it symbolizes the presence of God as the New Covenant and Creator; for those who continue in unbelief, it suggests the presence of God as the Lord of wrath and eternal judgment (Hokma).
- (3) As a result of the earthquake, the large stone blocking the entrance of the tombs was rolled away, and many bodies of saints who had died were raised. This is a fulfillment of the belief that there would be a resurrection of the dead when the Messiah (Christ) came (Matthew 9:25; 22:23). It also serves as a sign of the resurrection of all the saints at the second coming of Jesus.

Their resurrection should be seen not as a restoration of life on earth, but as a demonstration of the power of Jesus' resurrection. Therefore, it is likely that they were resurrected in glorified bodies. In any case, the bodies of the dead rising from their graves and coming out after Jesus' resurrection symbolize (1) the victory of Jesus Christ over death and the life-giving influence that victory brings to the saints (1 Corinthians 15:55-57), (2) the vivid testimony that Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection of the saints (verse 23), and (3) the liberation of the saints from the power of the grave through Jesus' death and resurrection, allowing them to enjoy the joy of life (Ephesians 4:8-9) (Hokma, Internet).

**Jesus is still saying to the hypocrites today,
“You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to
human traditions.” “You have rejected the commands of God
in order to keep your traditions.”**

When the Pharisees and some teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem saw that some of Jesus' disciples were eating with unwashed hands, they asked Jesus, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat." The "tradition of the elders" they referred to included the practice of not eating without first washing hands and also cleansing themselves after coming from the marketplace before eating. Additionally, there were many other things to observe, such as washing cups, pitchers, and metal bowls. However, Jesus answered them, saying, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men ... You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who kidnaps another and sells him must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus, you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that" (Mark 7:1-13, Korean Modern Bible). When reflecting on this passage, I have a few thoughts:

- (1) There were at least two reasons why crowds gathered around Jesus: (a) When Jesus took pity on a man with leprosy and healed him, the man went out and spread the news, causing people to continue gathering around Jesus from all over (Mark 1:40-45). (b) Jesus said to the crowds, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill" (John 6:26). However, the Pharisees and teachers of the law gathered around Jesus for different reasons. They did so to observe whether Jesus was breaking the law (Luke 14:1; see also Mark 2:16), to see if he was violating traditions (Mark 7:5; Luke 5:33), to find evidence to accuse him for healing on the Sabbath (Luke 6:7), to test him (Matthew 16:1, 19:3; Mark 8:11, 10:2), to trap him with his words (Mark 12:13), or to attempt to entangle him in his speech (Matthew 22:15). So, why do we gather around Jesus? Isn't it because He has the words of eternal life? (Ref.: John 6:68). We should listen carefully and understand the words of eternal life that Jesus speaks to us (Ref.: Matthew 15:10; Mark 7:14).
- (2) The Pharisees and Jews originally followed the traditions passed down from their ancestors, where they would not eat without first washing their hands, and when returning from the marketplace, they would not eat without first cleansing themselves. They also had many other practices to follow, such as washing

cups, pitchers, and bronze vessels (Mark 7:3-4). In response to this, Jesus said, “You hypocrites ...,” “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me,” “They worship me in vain,” and “You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions” (vv. 6-9, Korean Modern Bible). To put it in modern terms, those who forsake God's commandments in order to uphold church traditions are seen by the Lord as hypocrites. If they honor the Lord with their lips but their hearts are far from Him, they are merely worshiping in vain. These hypocrites may appear clean on the outside, but their hearts are full of greed and indulgence (Matthew 23:25). They are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside, but inside full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean (v. 27). Thus, the vain worship offered by such hypocrites is viewed by God in this way: "What is the use of your many sacrifices to me? I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths, and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen" (Isaiah 1:11-15). For these hypocrites, misfortune will inevitably come upon them (vv. 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29).

- (3) Jesus is still saying to the hypocrites today, “You have let go of the commands of God and held up human traditions” and “You have rejected the commands of God in order to keep your traditions” (Mark 7:8-9, Korean Modern Bible). When our pastors do not take care of their wives and children (family) according to the church’s tradition(?) and serve the Lord’s church devotedly even at the expense of them, they are making God’s word void (v. 13) and rejecting God’s commands (v. 9). They “have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers” (1 Timothy 5:8, Korean Modern Bible).

When I meditate on the words that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove ...

When I meditate on the words that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove (Mark 1:10), I think of the words that John the Baptist would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the time he was in his mother's womb (Luke 1:15, Korean Modern Bible) and that "God has poured out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:5, Korean Modern Bible).

Those who reject Jesus

Even though Jesus taught with wisdom, causing many people to listen and be amazed, and even though He healed many sick people with His power, for those who rejected Him, He was simply "the son of Mary, the carpenter, and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon," and they also said, "Are not His sisters here with us?" To them, Jesus responded, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own town, among his relatives, and in his own home." Because of their lack of faith, He could do no miracles there, except lay His hands on a few sick people and heal them (Mark 6:2-5). By rejecting Jesus, these people were also rejecting God the Father, who sent Him (Luke 10:16). The reason they rejected Jesus was because they did not believe in Him (Mark 6:6). Even today, those who do not believe in Jesus and reject Him also reject Christians who believe in Him and completely reject Christianity itself (Ref.: Acts 28:22). Some even go so far as to reject Christian family members who believe in Jesus, and they persecute them. When reflecting on those saints who, like Jesus, are rejected for their faith, even by their beloved family members, and who suffer persecution, I am reminded of the first verse of the hymn "Faith of Our Fathers": "Faith of our fathers! living still In spite of dungeon, fire and sword; O how our hearts beat high with joy Whene'er we hear God's glorious Word: Faith of our fathers, holy faith! We will be true to Thee till death."

The reason they wanted to sentence Jesus to death was because they were convinced that He had committed the sins of temple desecration and blasphemy.

When the high priest said to Jesus,
“I charge you under oath by the living God:
Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God,”
Jesus replied, “You have said so.
But I say to all of you:
From now on you will see the Son of Man
sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One
and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
Then the high priest tore his clothes and said,
“He has spoken blasphemy!
Why do we need any more witnesses?
Look, now you have heard the blasphemy.
What do you think?”
“He is worthy of death,” they answered
(Matthew 26:63-66, Korean Modern Bible).
The reason for this is that,
from the perspective of the high priest and the Jews,
they believed that “the Lord our God, the Lord is one”
(Deuteronomy 6:4, Korean Modern Bible).
So, when Jesus said, “I and the Father are one,”
the Jews “picked up stones to stone him”
(John 10:30-31, Korean Modern Bible).
Ultimately, the reason the high priests and the Jewish council
wanted to sentence Jesus to death
(Matthew 26:59; Matthew 26:66)
was because they were convinced
that Jesus had committed the sins
of temple desecration (v. 61) and blasphemy (vv. 63-65).

Lessons learned when meditating on the order of Jesus' public ministry

As Jesus began His public ministry,
the first thing He did was preach the gospel of God
(Mark 1:14-15).

Then, He called His disciples (vv. 16-20),
and after that, He went into the synagogue and taught (vv. 21-22).

Following that, He cast out an unclean spirit from a man
possessed by a demon in the synagogue, healing him (vv. 23-27).

Then, He took Simon's mother-in-law by the hand,
raised her up, and healed her from a fever (vv. 29-31).

As I meditate on this sequence, the lesson I receive is that,
above all else, the priority should be preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ
[Ref.: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation”
(Mark 16:15)].

Next, making disciples is essential
[Ref.: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...”
(Matthew 28:19)].

After that, the ministry of teaching must be done diligently and consistently
[Ref.: “Command and teach these things.

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young,
but set an example for the believers in speech,
in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture,
to preaching, and to teaching”
(1 Timothy 4:11-13)].

In the midst of all this, as I meditate on Jesus' healing ministry,
my prayer is that through the gospel of God that He preaches
and the Word of God that He teaches,
He will reveal the power of the gospel
and the power of the Word,
healing the hearts of Jesus' disciples above all.

May the amazing miracles of Jesus happen to the beloved sick people whom “The Elephants” pray for with faith.

As Jesus was preaching the word of God to the crowd of people who had gathered in the house, so crowded that they could not even get in, four men came to Jesus carrying a paralyzed man. Because they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they tore down the roof over the place where Jesus was and lowered the man on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:2-5, Korean Modern Bible). When I meditate on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) When I think about the four people who carried the paralyzed man on a mat and brought him to Jesus, I suddenly remembered something my late cousin, who battled cancer in her life, once said to me. As far as I can recall, she said, “The Elephants.” The meaning of “The Elephants” is, “Like the elephants that surround a birthing elephant and fight off predators during the birth process, praying believers who immediately surround you in prayer during a crisis provide protection in the spiritual warfare that ambushes us all at times” (Internet). Our cousin was a woman blessed with friends like that. I believe that the four people who helped the paralyzed man were “The Elephants” to him. Like them, may we also become “The Elephants” for family members, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, or those we are trying to reach with the gospel who are battling cancer or going through tough times, surrounding them with prayer in faith, love, and hope, showing Jesus’ love for His friends (Ref.: Romans 5:8, Korean Modern Bible).
- (2) The four people, when they couldn't bring the paralyzed man to Jesus because the house was too crowded, dug through the roof where Jesus was and lowered the mat on which the man was lying, became even more vivid in my meditation as I read the interpretation from the Hokma Commentary: “The four companions did not give up and did their utmost. In the end, they took the most proactive action, though it was a roundabout way. They carried the patient up through the outside staircase to the roof, tore off the roof, and lowered the patient to where Jesus was. Meanwhile, a typical Palestinian working-class house was usually a small, single-room structure made of mud bricks with a flat roof. The roof would have an outside staircase, making it possible to climb onto the roof. The roof was typically constructed by laying beams made of wood, then covering them with straw, and filling the gaps with dirt to keep out the rain. Occasionally, tiles would be placed on top of the beams, with straw and dirt placed on top of the tiles (see 'The Structure of Palestinian Homes in Jesus' Time' in the Sermon on Mark 2:1-28). Therefore, the people who took the paralyzed man onto the roof would have removed the dirt, straw, lime, planks, and tiles covering the roof (which would have certainly caused dust to fall into the house) and then lowered the patient through the now-exposed beams” (Hokma). Reflecting on this, I realize

how precious the dedicated efforts of those four people were. Especially, I think about how desperately they must have wanted the paralyzed man to meet Jesus and be healed. I believe their hearts were like those of "The Elephants," the brothers and sisters who fervently prayed for our beloved cousin, Christie, with the love of the Lord. I think that when those four people tore off the roof to lower the paralyzed man before Jesus, they must have been prepared to pay for the repairs to the roof to the house owner. And indeed, the "Elephants" who prayed for Christie also showed great love by financially supporting Christie, her husband, and their five children. I am deeply grateful for that.

- (3) Even though Jesus saw and knew the dedicated efforts of those four people, the Bible says, "When Jesus saw their faith..." (Mark 2:5, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this verse, I remember the words of the Apostle James in James 2:14-26, where he encourages us to have a 'faith that is accompanied by actions': "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:14-17, Korean Modern Bible). I believe that when Jesus saw the four people who tore off the roof and lowered the paralyzed man on a mat before Him, He saw a living faith in their actions. And then Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). However, I think this may not have been the first thing the four people wanted to hear. Perhaps, they were expecting Jesus to say, "Get up, take your mat, and walk" (Mark 2:9, Korean Modern Bible), because just as those who pray as "The Elephants" for someone battling cancer would most earnestly want the Lord to heal that person's cancer, these four people might have also wanted the physical healing to come first. But why did Jesus say to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven"? From our perspective, physical healing is the urgent need, but from the Lord's perspective, forgiving our sins is the priority. Ultimately, after forgiving the man's sins, Jesus told him, "Get up, take your mat and go home," and the man "got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of them all" (Mark 2:11-12, Korean Modern Bible). The paralyzed man, who had been brought in on a mat through the roof with the help of those four people, was now walking out of the house on his own two feet. Ha-ha. I pray that the same miraculous works of forgiveness and healing performed by Jesus may arise for those we love who are battling illness, as the "Elephants" pray in faith for their loved ones.

The most important backbone of all Jesus' public ministry

When we meditate on God's words, "Very early in the morning, Jesus got up and went away to a solitary place to pray" (Mark 1:35, Korean Modern Bible), we come to think of several things about Jesus' prayer:

- (1) I think that perhaps the reason Korean churches have dawn prayer meetings is because of this word.
- (2) I think "early dawn" means "quiet time." I think of the lyrics of the first verse and chorus of the hymn, "Go, Carry thy Burden to Jesus": "Go, carry thy burden to Jesus, And lay down thy load at His feet, Where Calvary's cross is uplifted, Find pardon and comforting sweet. O, steal away softly to Jesus, To Him let thy heart be outpoured; Thy Father, who seeth in secret, Shall give thee a gracious reward."
- (3) I think it is precious to have the habit of starting the first hour of the day with prayer.
- (4) I think "a secluded place" (the Korean Revised Version is "a quiet place") means "quiet place." This is Mark 6:32 Korean Modern Bible: "So Jesus and his companions went out in a boat to a quiet place." I think we each need to have our own quiet place, that is, a place to pray.
- (5) When I meditate on the words of Jesus, who went to a quiet place and prayed quietly to God the Father during His quiet time, I am reminded of what Henri Nouwen said—that we must turn the lonely wilderness into a garden of solitude. The difference between loneliness and solitude is that loneliness is considered as being alone, while solitude is considered as being with God. Yet, we live in the midst of a city, not a wilderness, and still experience loneliness. We experience a loneliness in the crowd that is more frightening than the loneliness of the wilderness. What is even more frightening is that we are often incapable of transforming this loneliness in the crowd into a garden of solitude. In other words, we are not experiencing the power of prayer. Instead of conversing with God, we prefer to talk to our close friends. Rather than listening to God's voice, we prefer to listen to human voices. We prefer time spent connected with people and the internet over time spent alone in the wilderness with God. Even though the Immanuel God is always with us, when we consider why we cannot feel God's presence, perhaps it is because we do not enjoy solitude but strongly dislike loneliness. We need to become more accustomed to some loneliness. We need training to be alone with a quiet heart in a quiet place during quiet time. Through that training, we must develop the ability to transform the lonely wilderness into a garden of solitude by experiencing God's presence with us.
- (6) I believe that Jesus' intimate fellowship with God the Father while praying alone in a quiet place during quiet times was the most important backbone of all of Jesus' public ministry.

The Miracle of the "Five Loaves and Two Fish" (Comparison of the Four Gospels)

The place where Jesus, His disciples, and many people were gathered was a field, and the day was already getting late. The disciples said to Jesus, "Send the people to the nearby villages so they can buy themselves something to eat." But Jesus told them, "You give them something to eat." The disciples then asked, "Should we go and spend 200 denarii on bread to give them something to eat?" Jesus replied, "Go and see how many loaves you have. Find out." When they did, they found that they had only five loaves and two fish. At that moment, Jesus instructed the disciples to have everyone sit down in groups on the green grass. The disciples arranged the people in groups of 100 and 50. Jesus then took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. Everyone ate and was satisfied, and they collected twelve baskets of leftovers. The number of men who had eaten was about 5,000 (Mark 6:35-44, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this passage, several thoughts come to mind::

- (1) The place where Jesus, His disciples, and many people were gathered is described as a field (Mark 6:35), but in John 6, it is mentioned as a "mountain" on the "other side of the Sea of Galilee" (John 6:1-3).
- (2) It is mentioned that it was "already late" (Mark 6:35, Korean Modern Bible), but in Matthew 14, it says "evening" (Matthew 14:15, Korean Modern Bible), and in John 6, it says "the Passover, a Jewish festival, was near" (John 6:4, Korean Modern Bible). The mention of "Passover" by the Apostle John is theologically significant. The reason why Jesus performed the miracle of feeding approximately 5,000 men with not only two fish but especially five loaves of bread when the Passover was approaching was because Jesus, the bread of life (John 6:48), the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), was preparing to be crucified. His death on the cross was so that everyone who believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).
- (3) When Jesus' disciples said to Him, "This place is a wilderness, and it is already late. Send the people to the surrounding villages so they can buy themselves food" (Mark 6:35-36, Korean Modern Bible), similar words are found in Matthew 14:15 and Luke 9:12 (though Luke adds "find lodging" in his account). However, in John 6, there are words not recorded in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). These are: (a) Jesus' question to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (John 6:5), and Philip's response, "It would take more than two hundred denarii to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:7), and (b) Andrew's words, "Here is a boy with five barley loaves and two fish, but how far will they go among so many?" (John 6:9). Specifically, Andrew's statement is a detailed explanation of Mark 6:38, where Jesus tells the disciples, "Go and see how many loaves you

have.” When they found a boy with five barley loaves and two fish (John 6:9), they reported this, and in Matthew 14:17, the disciples said, "We have here only five loaves and two fish," and in Luke 9:13, they said, "We have only five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." From these passages, it can be concluded that Jesus' question to the disciples was, "Where shall we buy bread to feed these people?" (John 6:5), and Philip's answer was, "Even if we had two hundred denarii, it would not be enough for each to have a little" (John 6:7). Mark 6:38 mentions, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and feed them?" which is not found in Matthew and Luke. Andrew's answer was, "Here is a boy with five barley loaves and two fish, but how far will they go among so many?" (John 6:9). The disciples' response to Jesus' question was, "We only have five loaves and two fish, and how could we feed this many people without buying food?" (Luke 9:13, Korean Modern Bible). In other words, the disciples' answers to Jesus' test question were that it was impossible to feed about 5,000 men with only five barley loaves and two fish. Mark 10:27 (New Translation) says, "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'" Luke 1:37 (New Translation) says, "For nothing is impossible with God." What the disciples missed in their responses to Jesus' test question was the word "we" that Jesus used. "We" includes Jesus, who is God, and who is capable of doing all things. However, the disciples did not look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2). They did not realize that Jesus, the one who posed the test, was the answer.

- (4) In Mark 6:39-40, when Jesus commanded His disciples to have all the people sit in groups on the green grass, they sat in groups of 100 or 50. However, in Luke 9:14, it is written that Jesus instructed them to have the people sit in groups of about 50. Matthew 14:19 simply says, "He directed the people to sit down on the grass," and John 6:10 records Jesus saying, "Have the people sit down." The difference here is that only Mark mentions "green grass." Another difference between Mark and Luke is the number of people in each group: Mark says the people sat in groups of 100 or 50, while Luke says they sat in groups of about 50. Though the difference in numbers seems not very significant, reflecting on Mark's mention of "green grass" brought to mind Psalms 23:1-2: "The Lord is my shepherd; I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters."
- (5) In Mark 6:41, it says that Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks ["gave thanks before breaking the bread" (Korean Modern Bible)], then broke the bread and gave it to His disciples to distribute to the people, and He also gave the two fish to everyone. Matthew 14:19, Luke 9:16, and John 6:11 also describe similar events. One interesting detail is in John 6:11, where it says, "He gave them to those who were seated as much as they wanted." This is significant because when Jesus gave thanks to God the Father in heaven, broke the bread and fish, and gave them to the disciples to distribute to about 5,000 men [possibly about 10,000 when including women and children (Matthew 14:21)], it was an act that could only have been done by faith. For example, Philip, a more

calculating person, had answered, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:7, Korean Modern Bible). How could Philip, who doubted that so much could be provided, distribute the bread and fish to so many people as they desired? It was an impossible action without faith. This brings to mind Philippians 4:13: "I can do all this through Him who gives me strength." Another intriguing point is that Jesus "looked up to heaven and gave thanks" when He received the five loaves and two fish (Mark 6:41). How could Jesus give thanks in that situation? From this, I learn that no matter what situation we find ourselves in, we should not be led by the circumstances to complain or grumble. Instead, we should give thanks to God in everything, in accordance with His will (1 Thessalonians 5:18), and do so with faith. When we do this, God's miraculous works occur. For instance, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been in the tomb for four days, Jesus had the stone rolled away and then "looked up and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that You sent Me.'" After saying this, He called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" and the dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen (John 11:41-44). This shows that giving thanks to God the Father with faith is a very powerful act!

- (6) The result of Jesus' miracle of the five loaves and two fish was that "they all ate and were satisfied, and the leftover pieces of bread and fish were gathered up and filled twelve baskets" (Mark 6:42-43). Similar records of this result are found in Matthew 14:20, Luke 9:17, and John 6:12, but only in John 6:12 does it include Jesus' words: "Gather the leftover pieces so that nothing is wasted." This command from Jesus led the disciples to gather the remaining food, and as a result, the leftover pieces of bread and fish (Mark 6:43) were collected into twelve baskets [John 6:13 specifically mentions "the leftover pieces of barley loaves," without mentioning fish]. Why did Jesus instruct that the leftover pieces should not be wasted? According to scholar Lightfoot, in Jewish customs, any leftover food from a meal served would become the portion of those who served it. Hoekma comments, "Jesus gives gifts generously, but forbids waste. Wasting material goods is not God's will" (Internet).

Hypocritical believers like the Pharisees who test the true disciples of Jesus ...

Hypocrite believers like the Pharisees
who test the true disciples of Jesus
who are trying to live according to the truth and the teachings of God,
have sweet words with their lips,
but their thoughts are deceitful
(Ref.: Matthew 22:16-18, Korean Modern Bible).

Why didn't Jesus tell them that his heart was so deeply troubled that he was ready to die?

Jesus, who went to a place called Gethsemane with His disciples,
told the eight disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray,"
and then took only three disciples—Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, John and James—
with Him. He said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.
Stay here and keep watch with Me" (Matthew 26:36-38, Korean Modern Bible).
Why did Jesus tell the eight disciples,
"...you stay here" and not share with them that His soul
was deeply troubled and at the point of death?
Why did He not tell them, "Stay here and keep watch with Me,"
but only spoke these words to Peter, John, and James?

We must be dedicated to cleansing the filth in our hearts.

After speaking to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (scribes), who were making the word of God of no effect through traditions like human-made laws and doing many similar things (Mark 7:1, 7, 13), Jesus called the crowd to Him again and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this: nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them" (vv. 14-15, Korean Modern Bible). When He entered the house and His disciples asked about this parable, He said to them, "Are you so dull? Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body" (By this, He declared all foods clean.) "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person" (vv. 17-23, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflect on these words, several thoughts come to mind::

- (1) Jesus said to the crowd, "Listen to me and understand this" (v. 14, Korean Modern Bible) ["Listen and understand" (Matthew 15:10, Korean Modern Bible)], while to His disciples He said, "Are you still so dull?" (v. 16, Korean Modern Bible; Mark 7:18, Korean Modern Bible). This reflects that both the crowd and Jesus' disciples did not understand this parable. However, the difference is that only Jesus' disciples [according to Matthew 15:15 in the Korean Modern Bible, it was "Peter" among them] asked Jesus to explain the meaning of this parable (Mark 7:17) [asked for an explanation (Matthew 15:15, Korean Modern Bible)]. Psalms 119:169 in the Korean Modern Bible says: "Hear my prayer, O Lord; give me understanding according to your word." Our desire for understanding comes because understanding comes from God (Proverbs 2:6). When we strive for understanding (v. 3) and decide to humble ourselves before God to gain understanding, God will hear our prayer and answer it from the first day of that decision (Daniel 10:12). The answer to that prayer will be that the Lord gives us understanding, so that we may know the true God (1 John 5:20). In fact, the Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10, Korean Modern Bible). Therefore, the Bible says that those who have this understanding are happy (Proverbs 3:13). This understanding will protect us (2:11) and give us life (Psalms 119:144).
- (2) The Pharisees, who heard Jesus' parable, became angry [they were offended by it (Korean New Revised Bible)], and the disciples asked Jesus if He was aware of this (Matthew 15:12) (this account is not in Mark 7). In response, Jesus answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up. Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit" (Matthew 15:13-14, Korean Modern Bible). Why did the Pharisees get angry after hearing Jesus' parable? Why did this parable become an offense to them? The reason is that through the parable, Jesus pointed

out their "wrong understanding of the law" (Hokma). The fact that the Pharisees were angered shows that they did not accept Jesus' words as the true truth but were offended by them, becoming adversaries of the truth (Hokma). According to Hokma: "In fact, anger toward a person who speaks the truth arises from two causes: (a) the loss of trust in what they had previously believed was right and a sense of betrayal toward themselves, and (b) the refusal to acknowledge that their judgment was false and unjust, and instead, the anger comes from an attitude that condemns the person speaking the truth, which reflects a distorted mindset that cannot honestly accept the truth and fears and turns away from it" (Hokma). Not only did the Pharisees oppose Jesus' words of truth, but they also opposed Jesus, who is the truth (John 14:6). As hypocrites, they are like "plants not planted by my (Jesus') heavenly Father," and on the Day of Judgment, they will "be pulled up" (Matthew 15:13, Korean Modern Bible) and face final destruction [Matthew 13:19, 40 (Hokma)]. Furthermore, Jesus' statement about them being "blind guides" and the saying, "If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit" (Matthew 15:14, Korean Modern Bible), implied that the hypocritical Pharisees, who could not discern the truth and instead opposed it, were walking the path of falsehood and destruction. Those who followed their false teachings and outward appearances would also be spiritual "blind" followers, and together with the Pharisees, they would reach eternal damnation and be cast into the fires of hell (Hokma).

- (3) The reason Jesus told his disciples, "Nothing that goes into a person from outside can defile him," is because "it does not enter the heart but passes through the stomach and out of the body." "That is why Jesus declared all foods clean" (Mark 7:18-19, Korean Modern Bible). 1 Timothy 4:3-5, Korean Modern Bible: "They [those who reject the faith and follow deceiving spirits and teachings of demons, lying hypocrites whose consciences are numbed (vv. 1-2, Korean Modern Bible)] forbid marriage and forbid the eating of certain foods. But foods are given by God to be eaten with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. Everything created by God is good, and nothing should be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because the food is made holy by the word of God and prayer." Therefore, the apostle Paul said, "Why should I be criticized for the food for which I am thankful when I eat it with thanksgiving?" (1 Corinthians 10:30, Korean Modern Bible)
- (4) Jesus said to His disciples, "What comes out of a person's heart is what defiles them" (Mark 7:20, Korean Modern Bible). The reason for this is that "from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly" (vv. 21-22) [In Matthew 15:19, Korean Modern Bible, "greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly" are listed, but instead of those, it mentions "false testimony and slander"]. Jesus said, "All these evils come from inside and defile a person" (v. 23, Korean Modern Bible) [In Matthew 15:20, Korean Modern Bible, it also says, "eating with unwashed hands does not defile a person"]. Through Jesus' explanation of this parable, we must discern what defiles us and what does not. Therefore, we should not, like the Pharisees, fall into extreme mannerism and hypocrisy, constantly

focused only on washing away outward defilement (Hokma). Instead, we must recognize our internal sins, believe in the power of the precious blood that Jesus shed on the cross, confess our sins, repent, and commit ourselves to cleansing the defilement of our hearts.

Because we do not know the Bible and the power of God ...

When we meditate on the Bible passage where the Sadducees, who claim that there is no resurrection, come to Jesus and ask about the resurrection of the dead, I think that there are many things that we are mistaken about (misunderstanding) because we do not know the Bible and the power of God, as Jesus said (Ref.: Matthew 22:23-33).

God who gives us abundantly beyond all that we ask or imagine

Jesus not only healed a deaf and mute man (Mark 7:32-37), but also people brought to Jesus the lame, the crippled, the blind, the mute, and many other sick people, and laid them at His feet, and He healed them all (Matthew 15:30). "The mute spoke, the lame walked, the crippled stood up, and the blind saw, and the people were amazed and praised the God of Israel" (v. 31, Korean Modern Bible). "At that time, another large crowd gathered, but since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them" (Mark 8:1, Korean Modern Bible): "These people have been with me for three days, and they have nothing to eat. I feel sorry for them. Some of them have come a long way, and if I send them away hungry, they will collapse on the way" (vv. 2-3, Korean Modern Bible) (In Matthew 15:32, Korean Modern Bible, Jesus added, "I do not want to send them away hungry"). Then, the disciples replied, "Where in this wilderness can we get enough bread to feed such a large crowd?" And Jesus asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" (Mark 8:4-5). They answered, "Seven loaves and a few small fish" (Matthew 15:34). Jesus then instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground, took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks ["after giving thanks" (Korean Modern Bible)], broke them, and gave them to His disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the leftover pieces were gathered in seven baskets. The number of those who ate, besides women and children, was four thousand (vv. 36-38). As I reflect on these verses, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) Another large crowd that had gathered around Jesus had been with Him for three days without food, and Jesus felt compassion for them (Mark 8:1-2, Korean Modern Bible) [Note: The story of the "feeding of the 5,000" with two fish and five loaves does not contain this detail]. The fact that the crowd had been without food for three days indicates that not only they, but also Jesus and His disciples, had not eaten anything for three days. Saul (Paul), who encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, also did not eat or drink for three days (Acts 9:9) [The mention of "three days" made me think of the verse, "Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40, Korean Modern Bible), and how Jesus spoke to His disciples about being handed over to men to be killed and rising again after three days (Mark 9:31)]. Jesus said that if He sent the "people who had come from a long way" away hungry, they would collapse on the road (Mark 8:3). In this way, Jesus had compassion for those who had been hungry for three days. The Lord has compassion on the poor and needy, and He saves the lives of the destitute (Psalms 72:13).
- (2) Apart from women and children, there were about 4,000 men (Matthew 15:38). How could Jesus have fed such a large crowd of people if He did not provide food for them before sending them home? (Mark 8:4). During the Exodus, the Israelites said they were all going to starve to death in the wilderness (Exodus 16:3). At that time, God told Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you" (Exodus

16:4, Korean Modern Bible), and He provided "manna" (Exodus 16:31), which the Israelites did not know (Deuteronomy 8:3), to feed them for 40 years. The purpose was "so that you may know that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3). Physical hunger and poverty are good opportunities for us to learn that we live by every word of God!

- (3) When Jesus asked His disciples, "How many loaves do you have?" (Mark 8:5), they replied, "Seven loaves and a few small fish" (Matthew 15:34). In the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, Peter's brother Andrew brought five barley loaves and two fish and asked, "How can we feed so many people?" (John 6:9, Korean Modern Bible), but in the miracle of the feeding of the 4,000, the disciples did not say anything. I find their silence quite interesting. They could have asked Jesus something, just as they did during the feeding of the 5,000, but they didn't ask any questions or make any comments. Perhaps the reason for their silence was that they had already witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Maybe they simply told Jesus about the seven loaves and two fish, and after seeing Jesus perform a miracle with just five loaves and two fish to feed about 5,000 men, they were waiting and expecting to see how He would feed the large crowd with what they had now. Even when situations seem impossible, when we may be tempted to ask God all kinds of questions, I believe that we need to trust and rely on the Almighty Lord, and watch in faith as He makes the impossible possible, even in the silence.
- (4) Jesus commanded the large crowd to sit on the ground, and then, taking seven loaves of bread, He gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to His disciples to distribute, and He did the same with a few small fish (Mark 8:6-7). Even when we feel that what we have is very little and insufficient compared to the situation, we must follow Jesus' example and offer our thanksgiving prayers to God with faith. Before raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me" (John 11:41). When He did this, God raised the dead Lazarus (v. 44). God's amazing work happens when we, with faith, look up to heaven and offer thanksgiving prayers. I pray that the Lord will accomplish the miracle of thanksgiving through us.
- (5) A large crowd of about 4,000 men were all fed to satisfaction through Jesus' miracle of the seven loaves of bread, and there were seven baskets of leftovers (Mark 8:8, Korean Modern Bible) [In the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, twelve baskets were left over (John 6:13)]. How much more did they eat, considering the large crowd had been starving for three days and were fed by Jesus' miracle of the seven loaves? Yet, there were still seven baskets of leftovers, which leads us to confess that our God is "the God who, by His power at work within us, is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20, Korean Modern Bible).

We must live with this assurance of resurrection and pursue heavenly things.

The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together and went to Pilate, the governor, saying, "Sir, we remember that while He was still alive, that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore, command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So, the last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go your way, make it as secure as you can." So, they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard to watch over it (Matthew 27:62-66). As I reflect on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) When the chief priests and the Pharisees referred to Jesus as "that liar" (Matthew 27:63, Korean Modern Bible), I reflect on the fact that their father, the devil, is the father of lies and has no truth in him, as John 8:44 (Korean Modern Bible) reveals. This shows that the chief priests and Pharisees themselves were the true liars, for they had no truth in them and could not stand with the truth. Therefore, they called Jesus a liar despite His innocence (Ref.: Job 34:6, Korean Modern Bible). They claimed to know God, yet did not obey His commandments, making them liars and devoid of truth (Ref.: 1 John 2:4, Korean Modern Bible). Concerning such people, 1 John 5:10 (Korean Modern Bible) says: "... Whoever does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about His Son." These liars will perish (Ref.: Proverbs 19:9). They will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur (Ref.: Revelation 21:8).

- (2) As I meditate on the words of the chief priests and the Pharisees who came to Governor Pilate and said, "Your Excellency, we remember that when that liar was alive, he said that he would rise again after three days" (Matthew 27:63, Korean Modern Bible), it seems that they had heard from the Old Testament scriptures that "the Christ would suffer, die, and rise again on the third day" (Luke 24:46, Korean Modern Bible). However, since they did not believe Jesus was the Christ, when Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (John 2:19, Korean Modern Bible), He was referring to His body as the temple (John 2:21). They also did not believe when He said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (Luke 9:22, Korean Modern Bible). Despite their disbelief, they feared that Jesus' disciples might steal His body and tell people that He had risen from the dead, which led them to ask Pilate, "So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day" (Matthew 27:64, Korean Modern Bible). It seems that in their unbelief, they were anxious that Jesus' disciples might artificially prove His resurrection as a greater deception. Reflecting on the anxiety of the religious leaders at the time of Jesus, I began to wonder why, even in our faith, we sometimes experience anxiety

about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Like David, the psalmist, we need to pray to God, declaring to our souls: "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God" (Psalms 42:5, 11; 43:5, Korean Modern Bible).

- (3) As I reflect on the words where Governor Pilate tells the chief priests and Pharisees, "You have a guard. Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how" (Matthew 27:65-66, Korean Modern Bible), we know that their efforts were in vain. The reason for this is that Jesus had already told His disciples during His earthly ministry, "I will be handed over to the Gentiles to be mocked, flogged, and crucified. But on the third day, I will rise again" (Matthew 20:19, Korean Modern Bible) [Ref.: "From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (Matthew 16:21, Korean Modern Bible); "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31, Korean Modern Bible); "The Son of Man will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him, spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. On the third day He will rise again" (Mark 10:34, Korean Modern Bible); "And He said, 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law, and He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life'" (Luke 9:22, Korean Modern Bible); "After they have flogged Him, they will kill Him, and on the third day He will rise again" (Luke 18:33, Korean Modern Bible); "Didn't I tell you that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again?" (Luke 24:7, Korean Modern Bible)]. Just as He had said, Jesus was buried in the tomb, and on the third day, He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:4, Korean Modern Bible). The hymn "Low in the Grave He Lay" comes to mind: (Verse 1) Low in the grave He lay Jesus my Saviour! Waiting the coming day Jesus my Lord! Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes; (Verse 2) Vainly they watch His bed Jesus my Saviour! Vainly they seal the dead Jesus my Lord! Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes; (Verse 3) Death cannot keep his prey Jesus my Saviour! He tore the bars away Je-sus my Lord! Up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes; (Chorus) He arose a Victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever with His saints to reign. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose! The God who raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 10:40) will also raise us (1 Corinthians 6:14). "We know that the God who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to Himself" (2 Corinthians 4:14, Korean Modern Bible). Therefore, we should live with the assurance of this resurrection, seeking heavenly things (Ref.: Colossians 3:1).

We must be the voice of one crying out in the wilderness to make straight the way for the Lord's second coming.

When Jesus cried out on the cross, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani”

(meaning, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”),

some of the people standing there heard Him and said,

“This man is calling for Elijah,” while others said,

“Let’s see if Elijah comes to save Him”

(Matthew 27:46-47, 49, Korean Modern Bible).

Why did they think Jesus was calling for Elijah?

Could it be that when Jesus cried out, “Eli, Eli...” (meaning “My God”),

they thought He was calling for "Elijah"

(which means “My God is Yahweh”)?

Perhaps the reason they thought this was that the Jews were waiting

for the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5, which says:

"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you

before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes."

When the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites

to question John the Baptist, asking,

“Who are you?” and John honestly replied,

“I am not the Christ,” they then asked,

“Then who are you? Are you Elijah?”

The prophet Malachi’s prophecy about “the prophet Elijah”

(or “a prophet like Elijah,” Korean Modern Bible) refers to John the Baptist.

The Jews were expecting the “prophet Elijah” to come, as promised in Malachi 4:5.

Therefore, when Jesus cried out, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,”

they assumed He was calling for Elijah.

They thought that Elijah would come and save Him from the cross.

However, they misunderstood the prophecy and did not truly understand the Scriptures.

The “prophet Elijah” promised by God was not a savior.

As the prophet Isaiah foretold, he was merely

"the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord’”

(John 1:23, Korean Modern Bible).

We too should be the voice crying out in the wilderness,

preparing the way for the Lord’s return.

We too, like David or John the Baptist, can serve God's will our whole lives and then die.

John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the Lord (Mark 1:2-3),
after being cruelly arrested by the religious leaders who envied him
and by King Herod's soldiers (14:4, Chokmah),

Jesus went to Galilee to preach the good news of God, saying,

“The time has come! The kingdom of God has come near.

Repent and believe the good news!”

(vv. 14-15, Korean Modern Bible).

As I reflect on this passage, I think about this:

John the Baptist, after fulfilling his mission

of preparing the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ,

was ultimately “captured” (14:4) and beheaded by King Herod (6:16-29).

Although Jesus later said about John, “Among those born of women,

there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11),

John came “not to gain recognition for his greatness or to be taken up,

but to fulfill the role of being the forerunner of the Messiah.

After completing his mission of preparing the way for the Messiah,

he quietly disappeared from the stage of history” (Chokmah).

As I meditate on John the Baptist, I am reminded of a seminar

I attended years ago at Saddleback Church,

where Pastor Rick Warren shared a Bible verse

he said was his favorite, from Acts 13:36:

“Now when David had served God's purpose in his own generation,

he fell asleep; he was buried with his ancestors and his body decayed”

(Korean Modern Bible).

Like David and John the Baptist,

we too can live our lives serving God's purpose,

and when our time comes, we will pass away in the same way.

Hypocritical Pastors (1)

Hypocrite pastors only talk and do not practice.

Therefore, whatever correct words they say should be followed and observed,
but their actions should not be imitated

(Ref.: Matthew 23:3, Korean Modern Bible).

Hypocritical Pastors (2)

Hypocritical pastors put heavy burdens on others' shoulders
and do not lift a finger themselves

(Ref.: Matthew 23:4).

Hypocritical Pastors (3)

Hypocritical pastors want to show off all their actions to people (Ref.: Matthew 23:5).

Hypocritical Pastors (4)

Hypocritical pastors love special seats at banquets and high places in churches,
they love being greeted at department stores,
and they love having people call them “pastor”

(Ref.: Matthew 23:6-7).

Woe to the hypocritical pastors (1)

Woe to the hypocritical pastors,
for they block the kingdom of heaven from entering themselves,
neither do they let in those who are entering
(Matthew 23:13, Korean Modern Bible).

Woe to the hypocritical pastors. (2)

Woe to the hypocritical pastors,
for they steal from widows and pray long prayers
to appear holy before men.
Therefore, they will receive a more terrible judgment
(Ref.: Matthew 23:14, Korean Modern Bible).

Woe to the hypocritical pastors. (3)

Woe to the hypocritical pastors,
for they travel across land and sea to win a single convert,
and when they do, they make him twice as much a child of hell as themselves
(Ref.: Matthew 23:15, Korean Modern Bible).

Woe to the hypocritical pastors. (4)

Woe to the hypocritical pastors,
for they are foolish spiritual blindness and also blind guides
(Ref.: Matthew 23:16, 17, Korean Modern Bible).

Woe to the hypocritical pastors. (5)

Woe to the hypocritical pastors,
for they pay their offerings and tithes thoroughly,
but neglect the more important commandments of God:
justice, mercy, and faith
(Ref.: Matthew 23:23).

Woe to the hypocritical pastors. (6)

Woe to the hypocritical pastors,
for they try to clean only the outside of the cup and dish,
while not cleaning the inside.
They are like whitewashed tombs.
They look beautiful on the outside,
but inside they are full of bones and uncleanness
(Ref.: Matthew 23:26-27, Korean Modern Bible).

Woe to the hypocritical pastors. (7)

Woe to the hypocritical pastors,
for outwardly they appear righteous to men,
but inwardly they are full of hypocrisy and sin
(Ref.: Matthew 23:28, Korean Modern Bible).

Woe to the hypocritical pastors. (8)

Woe to the hypocritical pastors,
for they are involved in the evil work of tormenting
and even killing true pastors,
but at the funeral services of those true pastors,
they pretend to love them and praise and exalt them.
Such hypocritical pastors are a brood of vipers.
They will not be able to escape the judgment of hell
(Ref.: Matthew 23:29-33, Korean Modern Bible).

"... will pay for all these sins."

Jesus clearly said,

"This generation will pay for all these sins"

(Matthew 23:36, Korean Modern Bible).

These people will go into eternal punishment.

Jesus said clearly:

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of these little ones,
you did not do for me." These people will go into eternal punishment

(Matthew 25:45-46, Korean Modern Bible).

**What is done to one of the least of these brothers of Jesus
is done to Jesus Himself.**

Anyone who lives according to the will of God,
the Father in heaven, is Jesus' brother

(Ref.: Matthew 12:50, Korean Modern Bible).

What is done to one of the least of these brothers of Jesus is done to Him.

The righteous will enter the place where they will enjoy eternal life

(Ref.: vv. 40, 46, Korean Modern Bible).

**So that we can fight against the schemes of the enemy devil
in this evil day, win, and complete everything
before we stand before the Lord ...**

Jesus woke up His sleeping disciples and said
that the time had come for Him to be handed over to sinners.
He said, "Get up. Let us go. The one who will betray me is near."
Before He had finished speaking, Judas, one of the twelve disciples,
arrived with a crowd sent by the chief priests and elders,
carrying swords and clubs
(Matthew 26:45-47, Korean Modern Bible).
At this time, if we do not stay alert and pray
so that we do not fall into temptation (v. 41),
we will become prey to the devil,
who prowls around like a roaring lion,
looking for someone to devour (Ref.: 1 Peter 5:8).
Our enemy, the devil, is trying to make us stumble
by using even our loved ones and those very close to us.
Therefore, in this evil day, we must arm ourselves
with God's armor to stand firm, fight against the enemy's schemes,
and be able to stand before the Lord after completing all things
(Ref.: Ephesians 6:11, 13).
In particular, we must be armed with "the sword of the Spirit"
(Ref.: Ephesians 6:17) and God's word, which is like a hammer
(Ref.: Jeremiah 23:29),
to fight against the devil's temptations and achieve victory
[Note: Jesus overcame the devil's temptations by saying,
"It is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10), as the Korean Modern Bible translates
"It is written" as "the Bible says."]

“The Scriptures say that these things must happen”

We must restrain and give up everything of our own
so that “the Scriptures say that these things must happen” will be fulfilled
(Ref.: Matthew 26:53-54, Korean Modern Bible).

We must voluntarily take up our own cross and follow Jesus.

The Roman soldiers, as they were leading Jesus out to crucify Him,
encountered a man from Cyrene named Simon.

They "forced" him to carry Jesus' cross
(Matthew 27:31-32; Mark 15:21, Korean Modern Bible).

I am reminded of Jesus' words:

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves
and take up their cross and follow me"

(Matthew 16:24, Korean Modern Bible).

According to these words, as disciples of Jesus,
we must follow Him not by force but voluntarily,
willingly taking up our own crosses and following Him.

Jesus will never force us to carry our cross.

“I will serve with gratitude, without a name or recognition.”

When evening came, Joseph of Arimathea,
a wealthy man and a disciple of Jesus,
went to the Roman governor Pilate and requested the body of Jesus.
Pilate ordered that it be given to him.

So, Joseph took the body of Jesus, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,
placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock,
rolled a large stone in front of the entrance, and went away
(Matthew 27:57-60, Korean Modern Bible).

Two days before Passover, when Jesus was dining
at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany,
a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume,
pure nard worth more than 300 denarii, and poured it on Jesus' head.
Jesus said, "She has done a beautiful thing to me.

This woman has poured perfume on my body to prepare me for burial.
I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world,
what she has done will also be told in memory of her"
(Mark 14:3-9, Korean Modern Bible).

When thinking about Jesus' words, "this woman,"
who prepared Jesus' burial in advance, and Joseph of Arimathea,
who placed Jesus' body in a new tomb and sealed it with a large stone,
I remembered the lyrics of verse 3 of hymn “Call'd of God, We Honor the Call”:
"Honor, glory, power and praise, Lord, to You, You only are due!
Shame and scorn and cross You carried; Grant us grace to carry them too,
Without name or fame, but, oh, Lord, Joy and thanks, to serve before You
Without name or fame, but, oh, Lord, Joy and thanks, to serve be-fore You!
A-men."

Irresponsible church leaders who do not realize their own sins are making the sinless Jesus into a sinner.

During the festival, it was customary for the governor to release one prisoner that the people desired. Pilate, the governor, asked the gathered crowd whether he should release Barabbas, the notorious prisoner, or Jesus Christ. The reason Pilate asked this was because he knew that the Jewish leaders had handed Jesus over to him out of envy. In this process, Pilate's wife sent a message to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." Meanwhile, the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be crucified. As a result, Pilate listened to the crowd, who shouted, "Release Barabbas!" rather than listening to his wife. Even though Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, he succumbed to the crowd's cries, "Crucify Him!" He thought it would be futile to resist, and he feared that a riot might break out. So, Pilate washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility!" All the people answered, "Let His blood be on us and on our children!" Then Pilate released Barabbas to them, had Jesus flogged, and handed Him over to be crucified (Matthew 27:15-26, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflect on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) I think the motive of the chief priests and elders who released the infamous criminal Barabbas and crucified Jesus was "envy." They must have been so jealous of Jesus that they crucified the innocent Jesus and released the infamous criminal Barabbas from prison. I think that envy is very dangerous. The latter half of Proverbs 14:30 Korean Modern Bible says "... Envy rots the joints."
- (2) Pilate, the governor, knew very well that the Jewish leaders handed Jesus over to him out of envy, and he also knew through his wife that he should have no part in condemning the innocent Jesus. Yet, he chose to release the notorious prisoner Barabbas and handed Jesus over to be flogged and crucified. The reason for this was that Pilate felt it would be "a futile act with no effect (result), and he feared that a riot might break out" (Matthew 27:24, Korean Modern Bible). What was it that Pilate, who governed Judea, hoped to achieve? Perhaps, like King Herod, who after killing James saw that the Jews were pleased and thus sought to arrest Peter (Acts 12:1-3), Pilate also handed Jesus over to be crucified because he saw that the Jews were happy about it. A leader who seeks to please people rather than uphold justice is already a corrupt leader. Church leaders, who are called by God to deliver the good news (gospel), do not aim to please people but to please God, who searches our hearts (1 Thessalonians 2:4).
- (3) Pilate, the governor, said in front of the crowd that he was not guilty of Jesus' death and that they were responsible for it (Matthew 27:24). How could he, after handing Jesus over to be flogged and crucified as the crowd desired, still claim that he was not guilty of Jesus' death? How could he shift the

responsibility to the people of Judah instead of taking responsibility himself? I believe that a church leader who fails to recognize their own sins is making the innocent Jesus appear guilty.

“Well done, good and faithful servant.”

When the Lord comes and settles accounts,
may we all receive this praise from the Lord:
"Well done, good and faithful servant.
You have been faithful in a few things;
I will put you in charge of many things.
Come and share your master's happiness"
(Ref.: Matthew 25:21, 23).

I am a sinner who is completely unworthy of becoming a pastor, but ...

John the Baptist said, "After me comes one who is more powerful than I,
the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie"
(Mark 1:7, Korean Modern Bible).
I, too, am a sinner completely unworthy of becoming a pastor,
but I can only confess that the Almighty Lord is working through me,
a powerless and helpless person.

When I meditate on these words, I am taught that I must offer my own life, as well as the lives of my beloved wife and children, to the Lord and that we must all obey Him until we die.

Finally, Jesus went to a place called Gethsemane, where He left eight of His disciples in one place and took three of them with Him to another location. He left them there and went a little farther, fell face down, and prayed to God the Father, saying: 'Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will' (Matthew 26:36-39, Korean Modern Bible). Wouldn't it have been better if, instead of sharing His deep distress with the 11 disciples, excluding Judas Iscariot, and asking them to 'stay here and keep watch with me,' He had prayed alone to God the Father? If it were me, I would have shared my troubled heart with those 11 beloved brothers and then asked for their prayers to pray together. But Jesus did not do so. Jesus chose to be alone with God the Father. Jesus went alone and prayed to God the Father." And Jesus first prayed to God the Father, saying, 'Please take this cup of suffering away from me.' When I meditate on this 'cup of suffering,' I remember when the mother of John and James came to Jesus and asked, 'Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.' Jesus responded to her, saying, 'You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup of suffering I am going to drink?' (Matthew 20:20-22, Korean Modern Bible). Jesus first prayed to God the Father to take away the 'bitter cup of suffering' that He had to drink. But Jesus prayed, 'Yet not as I will, but as you will' (26:39, Korean Modern Bible). Even though Jesus was 'greatly distressed' and said, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' He laid down His will and prayed to God the Father to obey His will, even to the point of death. After this, just as He had prayed, Jesus 'became obedient to death—even death on a cross.' (Philippians 2:8, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this passage, I learn that we must obey the Lord unto death, not only offering our own lives but also the lives of our beloved wife and children, surrendering them to the Lord."

Those who are cursed

Those who are cursed will depart from Jesus and enter the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Ref.: Matthew 25:41, Korean Modern Bible).

Jesus, who was mocked, knows the insults, mockery, and shame we face.

The Roman soldiers gathered their comrades,
stripped Jesus of His clothes, put a purple robe on Him,
and then wove a crown of thorns and placed it on His head.

They put a reed in His right hand,
knelt before Him and mocked Him, saying,
'Hail, King of the Jews!'

They also spat on Him and took the reed
and struck Him on the head.

After mocking Jesus, they took off the purple robe
and put His own clothes back on Him
and led Him away to be crucified"

(Matthew 27:27-31, Korean Modern Bible).

In this way, Jesus was mocked,
and He knows the insults, mockery,
and shame that we face

(Ref.: Psalms 69:19, Korean Modern Bible).

Even if people mock and ridicule us,
we, who have God's Word in our hearts,
should not be afraid or surprised

(Ref.: Isaiah 51:7).

Rather, we should praise the Lord, saying,

"In garments glorious He will come, To open wide the door;

And I shall enter my heavenly home, To dwell forever-more.

Out of the ivory palaces Into a world of woe,

Only His great eternal love, Made my Savior go"

(Hymn "My Lord Has Garments so Wondrous Find," verse 4).

"Beware"

After performing the miracle of the seven loaves, Jesus immediately got into a boat with His disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha. There, the Pharisees came and began to argue with Jesus, testing Him by demanding a sign from heaven (Mark 8:10-11). In response, Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit and said, "Why does this generation demand a sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to this generation." After saying this, He left them, got back into the boat, and went to the other side (Mark 8:12-13) [Matthew records it like this: "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah" (Matthew 16:2-4, Korean Modern Bible)]. The disciples forgot to bring bread, so there was only one loaf in the boat. Jesus warned them, "Be careful of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod," and the disciples whispered among themselves, thinking, "He is saying this because we have no bread" (Mark 8:14-16, Korean Modern Bible). Jesus, knowing what they were discussing, said, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? ... Do you still not understand?" (Mark 8:17-18, 21, Korean Modern Bible). "Why don't you understand that I was not talking about bread? Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then the disciples understood that Jesus was not talking about bread, but about the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:11-12, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this passage, several thoughts come to mind::

- (1) When I meditate on the fact that the Pharisees came and argued with Jesus, testing Him by demanding a sign from heaven (Mark 8:11, Korean Modern Bible), the verse from Matthew 22:18 in the Korean Modern Bible comes to mind: "But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, 'You hypocrites, why are you trying to test me?'" Even today, those in church leadership who follow a legalistic religious life are hypocrites with deceitful thoughts, testing the Lord, who is the head of the church, and causing disputes within the church through arguments. The Bible says, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Deuteronomy 6:16; Luke 4:12, Korean Modern Bible). The Bible also says, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak" (Matthew 26:41, Korean Modern Bible).
- (2) When I meditate on Jesus' words, "Why does this generation demand a sign?" (Mark 8:12, Korean Modern Bible), and "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but why can't you interpret the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah" (Matthew 16:3-4, Korean Modern Bible), I think of the phrase "wicked and adulterous generation." A generation that is corrupt in heart and depraved, committing unbelief and sin

against God, has lost the ability to discern the "signs of the times." These people, like the Pharisees, who have lost their purity and the ability to perceive the truth due to prejudice and dogmatism, have already been given enough signs and teachings, yet they continue to ask for signs with evil intent (Hokma). It seems that Jesus deeply sighed in His spirit because of this. Here is a verse from Isaiah 24:16, Contemporary Bible: "At that time, we will hear songs of praise to the Righteous One from the distant parts of the world. But still, evil will prevail, and betrayal will be everywhere, so I cannot help but groan."

- (3) When Jesus warned His disciples, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod," the disciples were so dull in heart that they could neither understand nor grasp the meaning of His warning (Mark 8:15, 17). So, Jesus said to them, "You of little faith" (Matthew 16:8), "Why don't you understand that I was not talking about bread? Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." Then the disciples realized that Jesus was not talking about the yeast of bread, but about the teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:11-12). As I meditate on this passage, I reflect that if we, too, become "dull in heart" (Luke 21:34, Korean Modern Bible) due to living in excess, drunkenness, or the worries of life, Jesus would warn us to "beware of the teachings of the hypocrites" (Matthew 16:12, Korean Modern Bible), to "beware of all kinds of greed" (Luke 12:15, Korean Modern Bible), to "be on your guard, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap" (21:34, Korean Modern Bible), to "be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:1, Korean Modern Bible), to "be careful not to look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven" (18:10, Korean Modern Bible), to "be on your guard. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him" (Luke 17:3, Korean Modern Bible), to "be on your guard. They will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues" (Matthew 10:17, Korean Modern Bible), and to "be on your guard. I have told you everything in advance" (Mark 13:23, Korean Modern Bible). Yet, even when these warnings are given to us, we are not only unable to understand them, but also unable to grasp their meaning.

Repentance of the heart related to forgiveness of sins

The beginning of the gospel (good news) of God's Son, Jesus Christ, is that, as God spoke through the prophet Isaiah,

He sent John the Baptist in the wilderness to proclaim repentance of the heart related to the forgiveness of sins, which is a holistic and fundamental change (Hokma).

By doing so, God prepared the way of the Lord and made it straight (Mark 1:1-4).

As we await, hope for, and expect the second coming of Jesus, like John the Baptist, we must also proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (good news) in this world, like a wilderness, while preaching repentance of the heart related to the forgiveness of sins.

By doing this, we will prepare the way for the Lord's return and make it straight.

Like John the Baptist and Jesus, we must also proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!" ["The kingdom of heaven has come near! Repent!" (Korean Modern Bible)] (Matthew 3:2; 4:17).

“We must ensure that no innocent person is killed for murder.”

The chief priests and elders, who sought evidence to condemn Jesus to death (Matthew 26:59), conspired to kill Him based on the charges of blasphemy against the temple (verse 61) and blasphemy against His divinity (vv. 63-65). They then bound Jesus and took Him to the governor, Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:1-2). Though Jesus was sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21), they considered Him a sinner deserving of death and handed Him over to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Clearly, Deuteronomy 19:10 states, "... an innocent person should not be put to death for a crime..." but they made the sinless Jesus into a condemned criminal. Here is the verse from 2 Corinthians 5:21: "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."

“Lord, Lord, open the door for us!”

After the door to the wedding feast was shut, the five foolish virgins cried out, “Lord, Lord, open the door for us!”
But the groom replied, “I tell you the truth, I do not know you”
(Matthew 25:11-12, Korean Modern Bible).

As I meditate on this passage,

I am reminded of Matthew 7:21 from the New Translation:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."

We must stay awake and be prepared for the return of the bridegroom, Jesus!

I pray that the Lord will baptize him with the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist baptized with water,
but Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit
(Mark 1:8, Korean Modern Bible).

Likewise, as I administer baptism
to the infant on Christmas Sunday
in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
I pray that the Lord will baptize him with the Holy Spirit.

I believe the Lord will turn our 'valley of trouble' into a 'valley of praise'!

When Jesus said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven," some of the teachers of the law (the scribes) sitting there thought to themselves, "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Immediately, Jesus knew in His spirit what they were thinking, and He said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So, He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone, and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:5-12, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this passage, several thoughts come to mind::

- (1) Why were some of the teachers of the law (the scribes) sitting in the house where Jesus was? (v. 1) Surely they weren't there just to listen to the words of God that Jesus was preaching? (v. 2) Wisdom (Chokmah) offers this explanation: "They came with a theological perspective, seeking to catch Jesus in some fault. So, they positioned themselves among the crowd, carefully observing every move Jesus made, and their hearts were like sharp blades, examining every situation and sharing their opinions. When Jesus began speaking about forgiveness of sins, they thought they had found the perfect opportunity" Chokmah). I believe this is a reasonable interpretation. Reflecting on this interpretation personally, I realize that like the scribes, when I listen to another pastor's sermon, instead of humbly listening, I tend to look for what might be wrong with it, trying to catch mistakes. Rather than allowing my heart to be pierced by God's word, which is like the sharp sword of the Holy Spirit, my heart seems to examine the pastor's words like a sharp blade, trying to find faults. As a pastor, it can be difficult to listen humbly to God's word.

- (2) From the perspective of those teachers of the law, Jesus' words to the paralyzed man, "Your sins are forgiven," were considered blasphemous (a sin of blasphemy). This is because they believed that only God could forgive sins, and they did not believe that Jesus Christ was one with God (John 10:30), meaning they did not believe Jesus was God. Not only these scribes, but also when Jesus was crucified, the high priest asked Jesus, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God?" Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say. But I say to all of you, in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" They answered, "He is worthy of death!" (Matthew 26:63-66, Korean Modern Bible). The high priest also believed that Jesus had committed blasphemy because He acknowledged Himself as the Son of God, the Christ. Furthermore, those who

were gathered there also shouted that Jesus should be condemned to death because, from their perspective, Jesus had committed the sin of blasphemy. The reason they shouted was that they did not believe Jesus was the Son of God, the Christ. Ultimately, their unbelief led them to accuse the sinless Jesus of being a sinner worthy of death, even though they themselves were sinners. Unbelief causes the mind to become busy and full of thoughts, often seeking to find fault with others, and leads one to condemn the other, even in their heart.

- (3) Jesus immediately knew the thoughts of those teachers of the law and said, "Why are you thinking these things?" This reminded me of Psalms 139:1-4: "O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely" (Korean Modern Bible). God, who knows everything about us, thinks of us in such a way that if we tried to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand by the sea (Ref.: vv. 17-18).
- (4) Jesus said to those teachers of the law, "I will show you that I have the privilege to forgive sins on earth." The meaning of this statement is that only God can forgive sins, and by saying this, Jesus was declaring that He is God. This God, Jesus, also said to us, "Forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:37). We must obey these words of Jesus. It is a privilege, by Jesus' love, to "forgive all those who sin against us" (11:4).
- (5) Jesus said to the teachers of the law, "I will show you that I have the privilege to forgive sins on earth," and then He spoke to the paralyzed man, saying, "I tell you, get up, take your mat, and go home." Immediately, he got up, took his mat, and walked out in full view of them all. Jesus, who forgave his sins, also healed the paralyzed man's illness. From Jesus' perspective, forgiving the man's sins was more urgent than healing his physical ailment. After forgiving his sins, Jesus then healed his disease. Perhaps the reason for this is that the cause of the man's illness was his sin. Therefore, Jesus first forgave the sin, the cause of his illness, and then healed his disease.
- (6) The house was so crowded, with no space even to stretch out a foot (Mark 2:1-2, Korean Modern Bible), yet the paralyzed man immediately got up, took his mat, and walked out in front of all those people, as Jesus had commanded. How could those people not be amazed by this? They were astonished and praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (v. 12, Korean Modern Bible). Similarly, when Paul and Silas were imprisoned, they didn't wait until they were freed by God's miraculous deliverance to praise God. Instead, while still in prison, they prayed and sang hymns to God (Acts 16:23-25). When King Jehoshaphat of Judah was attacked by the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites, after consulting with the people, he organized a choir, dressed them in holy garments, and placed them at the front of the army to sing, "Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever!" As

a result, when the choir sang praises, God caused confusion among the invading armies, causing them to fight and destroy each other. King Jehoshaphat and his people then gathered in the Valley of Berachah to praise God, and the place was named the "Valley of Praise" (2 Chronicles 20:1-2, 21, 26, Korean Modern Bible). I believe that the Lord will turn our "Valley of Achor" (the Valley of Trouble) (Joshua 7:26, Korean Modern Bible) into a "Valley of Praise"!

“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

A man with leprosy came to Jesus, knelt down, and said, "If You are willing, You can make me clean" (Mark 1:40, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflect on this verse, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) The fact that this man with leprosy called Jesus "Lord" and confessed this is a beautiful expression of faith. When Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus responded to Peter, saying, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:15-17, Korean Modern Bible).
- (2) I believe the way this man with leprosy prayed, saying, "If You are willing..." is a precious prayer. It reminds me of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Abba, Father, everything is possible for You. Take this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You will" (Mark 14:36).
- (3) I believe it is a beautiful expression of faith that this man with leprosy believed Jesus could make him clean if He was willing. This brings to mind Jesus' words: "Then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.' And his servant was healed at that moment" (Matthew 8:13). In fact, "Jesus, moved with compassion, reached out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing. Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed" (Mark 1:41-42, Korean Modern Bible).

The Lord knows my weaknesses, has compassion on me, and has actually helped me until now. He is still helping me, and I believe He will continue to help me until I leave this world and go to heaven.

As I meditate on the verse where Jesus was tempted
by Satan for forty days in the wilderness
(Mark 1:13, Korean Modern Bible),
I am reminded of how the Israelites,
during their exodus,
tested God in the wilderness by demanding excessive things,
rebellious, and stubbornly refusing to obey God
(Numbers 14:22; Psalms 106:14;
Hebrews 3:8, Korean Modern Bible).
I reflect and apply this to myself.
Although I, like the Israelites
in the exodus and the people of this world,
often harbor greed (Ref.: Numbers 11:4),
demand too much from God,
test Him, rebel, and stubbornly
disobey His Word countless times,
I know that because Jesus personally
experienced temptation and suffering,
He can abundantly help me in my trials
(Hebrews 2:18, Korean Modern Bible).
He knows my weaknesses and sympathizes with me (4:15).
He has helped me so far, continues to help me now,
and I believe He will continue to help me
until I leave this world and go to heaven.
Although I have often fallen into Satan's temptations and sinned,
thus obscuring God's glory,
I believe that God uses even that to humble me
(Ref.: Deuteronomy 8:16, Korean Modern Bible)
and refine me (Ref.: Job 23:10).
In the end, He is the God who blesses me
(Ref.: Deuteronomy 8:16).

God's calling

After going to Galilee and proclaiming the good news of God, saying, "The time has come! The kingdom of God is near; repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:14-15), Jesus was passing by the Sea of Galilee. He saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately, they left their nets and followed Him. A little farther along, He saw the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, who were in a boat, mending their nets. He called them, and they immediately left their father Zebedee and the hired men in the boat and followed Him (Mark 1:16-20, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this passage, a few thoughts come to mind:

- (1) When I meditate on the words that Jesus called four people to be fishers of men after being tempted by Satan for 40 days and going to Galilee to preach the good news (the gospel) of God, I think of "temptation," "gospel," and "making disciples." I think it is very important to make disciples of Jesus while preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ after overcoming the temptation of Satan.
- (2) When I think about the four people Jesus called to be His disciples, it's interesting that all four were fishermen, but it's even more interesting that He called "Simon and his brother Andrew" and "the two sons of Zebedee, James and John." This is because Jesus called these two brothers to become "fishers of men." As I reflect on this, I am reminded of how the Lord called my father and my third uncle, the late Pastor Andrew Kim, and anointed them to become pastors. Similarly, I cannot help but be grateful for God's great grace in calling and anointing my brother, Missionary Jimmy Kim, and me to become pastors as well. Furthermore, I am truly thankful that the Lord has called my beloved son, Dillon Seung-kwan (meaning: faithful and truthful, crown of victory), to study theology and serve as a preacher. I am also grateful that the Lord has called my dear eldest daughter, Yeri, to be a missionary in Japan for the second year. Moreover, just the other day, my youngest daughter, Karis, came into our room and shared her deep concerns with us, shedding tears and mucus. As her father, I could sense that she is deeply pondering the Lord's calling. I am thankful that the Lord has not only given Yeri a heart for missions but also given Karis the same heart. I can only offer my gratitude for their calling.

We must faithfully carry out our ministry, holding on to the hope of the Lord's return, loving our neighbors as ourselves according to His commandments, focusing on the Lord's death, and proclaiming the atoning death of Jesus Christ in faith.

One day, when the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees were fasting, people came to Jesus and asked, "John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples fast, but why do your disciples not fast?" Jesus answered them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast" (Mark 2:18-20, Korean Modern Bible). As I read the commentary by Chokmah on this passage, I had several thoughts:

- (1) The reason why the disciples of John the Baptist fasted was because their teacher, John, was in prison and because they sought true piety, asceticism, and a life of self-discipline. On the other hand, the Pharisees fasted as an external sign of their piety and devotion, only for the sake of formalism. Although the reasons for fasting were different between these two groups, the common factor was that they both believed that fasting was a way to show true piety. James 1:26-27 (Korean Modern Bible) says: "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this one's religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."
- (2) "Fasting, as a sign of self-control and sorrow (1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 12:11-23; Luke 5:35), is inappropriate when one is with Jesus. Jewish weddings, in particular, were very joyous events. Guests would sometimes participate in a celebration that could last a whole week. Fasting during such a joyful feast was unthinkable. Only on that day, when the joy of humans reaches its peak, do we see that even the law provides exemptions from various duties surrounding the wedding ceremony (Deuteronomy 20:7). "Therefore, Jesus said, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?' As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast" (Mark 2:19, Korean Modern Bible). Here, Jesus describes Himself as the "bridegroom," and the "friends of the bridegroom" who are "with the bridegroom" refer to Jesus' disciples and to all the redeemed saints, like you and me, who are already experiencing a foretaste of the joy of the heavenly wedding feast. Jesus, the bridegroom, will "present the church to Himself as a glorious church" (Ephesians 5:27, Korean Modern Bible). Moreover, the Lord will invite us to the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9, Korean Modern Bible). As the bride of Christ, the church, we are already experiencing the joy of this heavenly wedding banquet. Therefore, we must always rejoice, as commanded by God (1 Thessalonians 5:16). However, at the same time, in this fleeting world, which is "full of toil and trouble" (Psalms 90:10), there are times when

we must fast and pray to God over various issues (Ref.: Ezra 8:23, Korean Modern Bible). Furthermore, according to God's Word, we are called to "even now fast, weep, mourn, and truly repent and return to the Lord" (Joel 2:12, Korean Modern Bible). Could it be that the Lord is saying this to us? "The fast that I choose is to loose the chains of injustice, untie the cords of the yoke, and set the oppressed free" (Isaiah 58:6, Korean Modern Bible). "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (Matthew 6:16, Korean Modern Bible).

- (3) Jesus said, "The day will come when the bridegroom will be taken away. At that time, they will fast" (Mark 2:20, Korean Modern Bible). The Greek word for "taken away" here means "to take away violently" or "to remove," evoking the image of a painful, tearing separation. "... This indicates a forced removal that causes sorrow. Jesus, from the beginning of His ministry, was confronted with His death. The lives of His disciples were formed around this Jesus. Truly, the three years of Jesus' public ministry were the reason for the joy His disciples experienced. And His death becomes the reason why His disciples must fast. In any case, the focus of Jesus' ministry, centered on His death, breathes new truth and life into all dead religions and souls." I was reminded of 1 Corinthians 11:26, which we read during yesterday's communion service: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." Jesus focused on His death during His three years of ministry, and the Apostle Paul instructed that every time we celebrate communion, we should proclaim the Lord's death until His return. This teaches us that while living on this earth, we must live with the hope of the Lord's return, loving our neighbors as ourselves according to His commandments, and focusing on the death of the Lord, faithfully proclaiming the redemptive death of Jesus Christ in faith while carrying out our ministry.

When the Lord returns ...

The faithful and wise servant will be truly blessed when the Lord returns
(Ref.: Matthew 24:45-46, Korean Modern Bible).

Let us be faithful in the "small things" in the eyes of the Lord.

Instead of being faithful in "great things" or "many things" in the eyes of people,
let us be faithful in the "small things" in the eyes of the Lord.
Therefore, let us all participate in the joy of the Lord, not the joy of people
(Ref.: Matthew 25:21, 23).

What are the signs of the Lord's coming and the end of the world?

What are the signs of the Lord's coming and the end of the world?
Many people will come and say, "I am the Christ," and deceive many people.
There will be wars and rumors of wars, and famines and earthquakes in many places.
However, all of this is only the beginning of birth pains.
At that time, we will be captured by people and suffer,
and we will be hated by all nations because of Jesus.
Many will fall away from the faith, betray and hate one another.
Many false prophets will arise and deceive many people.
Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most people will grow cold.
But the one who endures to the end will be saved.
The good news of the kingdom of heaven will be proclaimed
throughout the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come
(Matthew 24:3-14, Korean Modern Bible).

The master entrusted his property to each according to their ability.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus tells us that the master entrusted his property (five talents, two talents, one talent) to each person "according to their ability" (Matthew 25:14-15, Korean Modern Bible).

As I meditate on this passage,

I realize that the "talents" given

to each of us are not our own, but belong to the Lord.

The all-knowing Lord has given each of us "talents" according to our abilities.

Therefore, we must recognize and accept with gratitude the "talents" given to us, understanding what our individual "abilities" and "talents" are.

The Prepared Virgins

At midnight, a cry was heard: "Here comes the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!"

All the ten virgins woke up and began to trim their lamps.

The foolish five virgins said to the wise ones,

"Our lamps are going out; give us some of your oil."

But the wise virgins replied, "There may not be enough for both us and you.

Go instead to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves."

While they were gone to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived,

and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet,

and the door was shut (Matthew 25:5-10, Korean Modern Bible).

As I meditate on this passage, the phrase "the prepared virgins" resonates with me.

Like the wise five virgins, we must be prepared to meet the bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

"I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (Revelation 21:2).

The important thing is that, as the servant of the Lord anointed and established by Him ...

When Jesus returned to Capernaum,
He preached the word of God in a house,
and many people gathered, so much
so that there was no room left, not even outside the door
(Mark 2:1-2, Korean Modern Bible).

It is unclear whether all those people came
because they genuinely longed for the word of God,
or whether they came because of the rumors of Jesus healing
a man possessed by an unclean spirit (1:23-28),
and healing the sick and casting out demons
when many sick and demon-possessed people were brought to Him
(vv. 32-34, Korean Modern Bible).

The important thing is that,
as the servant of the Lord anointed and established by Him,
I must follow the example of Jesus and,
whether there are many or few who hear the "gospel of God" (v. 14)
or "the word of God" (2:2, Korean Modern Bible),
or whether they listen or not (Ezekiel 2:5, 7; 3:11),
I must faithfully and diligently,
without omitting a single word,
proclaim all that God commands,
whether it is pleasing or not to those who hear
(Jeremiah 42:6), "with sincerity" (23:28),
"diligently" (25:3, Korean Modern Bible),
and "steadily" (26:5) in the same manner
as He has said (2:2, Korean Modern Bible).

I pray that the amazing healing work of the Lord's "Ephphatha" will occur for those saints who are currently unable to hear or speak properly.

When Jesus returned from the region of Tyre to the Sea of Galilee, people brought to Him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, begging Him to lay His hands on him. So, Jesus took the man aside, away from the crowd, and put His fingers in the man's ears. Then He spat and touched the man's tongue. After looking up to heaven, He sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha" (which means "Be opened"). Immediately, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak plainly. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone, but the more He told them, the more they spread the news. People were amazed and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!" (Mark 7:31-37, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) When I meditate on the fact that people brought a deaf and mute man to Jesus and begged Him to lay His hands on him (v 32, Korean Modern Bible), I have three thoughts:
 - (a) The "deaf and mute man" had both ears that couldn't hear, which is why Jesus "put His fingers into his ears" (v 33, Korean Modern Bible). From the fact that he is described as "mute," it seems that he was not completely unable to speak, but rather "had a language impairment" (Chokmah). In modern terms, this man appears to have been someone with both hearing and speech disabilities (Internet). The reason why someone with hearing impairment also has a speech disability is because "simply put, it's because they can't hear. Since they can't hear, even though they know the words, they can't make the sounds of those words. ... To speak is the same as producing sound. When you lose hearing, you can't hear the sounds. Even if you remember the pronunciation of words, it's not easy to produce those sounds if you can't hear them" (Internet).
 - (b) When I meditate on the fact that "people brought a deaf and mute man to Jesus," I am reminded of the passage where "four men carried a paralyzed man to Jesus" and "dug through the roof where He was staying and lowered the mat the man was lying on" (Mark 2:3-4, Korean Modern Bible). "When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'" (v 5, Korean Modern Bible). Just like these four men, I believe that the "people" who brought the deaf and mute man to Jesus did so out of faith. Therefore, I think Jesus healed the deaf and mute man because of their faith. I believe it is a great grace, love, and blessing from God that such people are praying to the Lord on our behalf.

- (c) When I meditate on the fact that "the people" pleaded with Jesus to "lay His hands" on "a deaf and mute man" (Mark 7:32, Korean Modern Bible), I am reminded of the passage where "a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit" "fell at Jesus' feet" and "begged Him to cast the demon out of her daughter" (vv 25-26, Korean Modern Bible). The word 'begged' here is described as "an imperfect tense, dramatically portraying the scene where the mother is repeatedly pleading with Jesus, hoping for the healing of her daughter" (Chokmah). Based on this, I think the people who brought the deaf and mute man to Jesus and asked Him to lay His hands on him were also pleading with Jesus repeatedly, hoping for his healing. I am reminded of the teaching in Luke 18, where Jesus used a parable to teach His disciples to always pray and not lose heart (v 1): "For a while the judge refused, but finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about people, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'" (vv 4-5, Korean Modern Bible). If even the judge, who neither feared God nor cared about people (v 2), granted the widow's plea, how much more will our Heavenly Father, who chose us, listen to our cries day and night (v 7)? One thing I continually plead with God is "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple" (Psalms 27:4, Korean Modern Bible).
- (2) When I meditate on the passage where Jesus took the deaf and mute man aside, put His fingers in his ears, spat on His fingers, touched his tongue, and said, "Ephphatha," which means "Be opened" (Mark 7:33-34), I have three thoughts:
- (a) The healing action in which Jesus "put His fingers in his ears and spat on His fingers to touch his tongue" is said to have been a method commonly used by Greek and Jewish doctors at that time (Taylor, Chokmah). An example of a similar act is found in John 9:6-7 in the Korean Modern Bible: "After saying this, Jesus spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the blind man's eyes. 'Go,' He told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam' (this word means 'Sent'). So, the man went and washed, and came home seeing."
- (b) When I meditate on the verse where Jesus "looked up to heaven and sighed" (Mark 7:34), I remember a sermon preached by our senior pastor during a Wednesday service, based on Romans 8:19-27, titled "Three 'Groans.'" The "three 'groans'" refer to (1) the groaning of creation (v. 22), (2) our groaning (v. 23), and (3) the "groaning of the Holy Spirit": "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans" (v. 26). The reason Jesus sighed and looked up to heaven before healing the deaf and mute man might be because Jesus was "sharing in the suffering" with him (Ref.: v 22), and also because He longed for the "redemption of our bodies" (Ref.: v. 23). One interesting point is that before performing the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus "looked up to heaven and

gave thanks" ["prayed a prayer of thanksgiving" (Korean Modern Bible)] (Mark 6:41), but before healing the deaf and mute man, He "looked up to heaven and sighed" (7:34).

- (c) When Jesus cried out "Ephphatha" (meaning "be opened") to the deaf and mute man, "immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak clearly" (vv. 34-35, Korean Modern Bible), I pray that the Lord's amazing healing work of "Ephphatha" will happen to the saints who are deaf or who cannot speak properly.

A truly happy person is someone who knows Jesus correctly, makes a proper confession of faith, and lives a right life of faith.

On His journey through the villages of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples two questions: (1) "Who do people say I am?" and (2) "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" The disciples' answer to the first question was, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." Peter's answer to the second question was, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:27-29, Korean Modern Bible). In a similar passage in Matthew 16 (Ref.: Luke 9:18-21), when responding to the first question, the disciples added, "Some say Jeremiah or one of the prophets," and to Peter's answer to the second question, he said, "... the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:14, 16, Korean Modern Bible). Additionally, in Matthew 16, there is a statement Jesus made to Peter: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (vv. 17-19, Korean Modern Bible). "Then Jesus warned His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ" (v 20, Korean Modern Bible; Ref.: Mark 8:30, Korean Modern Bible). As I meditate on this passage, I have several thoughts:

- (1) Why did Jesus ask His disciples, "Who do people say I am?" in the region of Caesarea Philippi, among so many other places? I was able to speculate on the reason by referring to the Chokmah commentary: "The inhabitants of this area were mostly Gentiles and idol worshipers. Among them, the natives worshiped Baal, and the Greek-speaking people built a temple to the god Pan, who was considered the god of the forests and wild beasts. Herod also built a temple to the emperor Augustus here to flatter him. In this land of idols, Jesus required His disciples to make a proper confession of faith" (Chokmah).
- (2) Why did people say Jesus was "John the Baptist," "Elijah," or "one of the prophets" (Mark 8:28), "Jeremiah" (Matthew 16:14), or "one of the old prophets who has come back to life" (Luke 9:19)? When I consider that some people said Jesus was "John the Baptist," I am reminded of King Herod. When he heard rumors about Jesus, he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist. He has come back to life, and that's why he has the power to perform miracles" (Matthew 14:1-2, Korean Modern Bible). "The Jews confused Jesus with John the Baptist because, like the Tetrarch Herod Philip (14:1-2), they remembered the power and explosive spirit of John's ministry when they saw Jesus' ability and the works He performed. This confusion also stemmed from the mistaken resurrection belief held by the Jews, who thought John the Baptist had come back to life" (Chokmah).

- (3) Why did Jesus ask His disciples, “But who do you say I am?” I believe the meaning behind this question is that Jesus was indicating that the responses from the people—“John the Baptist,” “Elijah,” “Jeremiah,” “one of the prophets,” or “one of the old prophets who has come back to life”—were all incorrect. That is why Jesus asked His 12 disciples, “But who do you say I am?” Similarly, I believe that today many people still do not truly understand who Jesus is and are mistaken about Him. Even those who attend church may not fully know who Jesus is. That is why I was led to reflect again on Philippians 3:7-11 in Korean Modern Bible: "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."
- (4) Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16, Korean Modern Bible). This confession of faith by Peter is “one of the most perfect confessions about Lord Jesus, and it is the core of the Christian creed. The reason is that this confession includes both the humanity of Jesus (“the Christ”) and His divinity (“the Son of God”), the purpose of Jesus coming to this earth, and His essential identity” (Chokmah). Jesus promised to build “His church” upon this confession of faith made by Peter (Matthew 16:18, Calvin). However, the Antichrist and liars deny that Jesus is the Christ (His humanity) and that Jesus is the Son of God (His divinity) (1 John 1:22). Today, the spirit of the Antichrist, the enemy of Christ, the spirit of lies [“the spirit of deception” (Korean Modern Bible)] does not acknowledge that Jesus came in the flesh (4:2-3, 6).
- (5) To Peter, who made this confession of faith, Jesus said, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven” (Matthew 16:17, Korean Modern Bible). Truly blessed is the person who knows Jesus correctly, makes a proper confession of faith, and lives out that faith correctly. Our Father in heaven has revealed to us who Jesus is, and the Spirit of truth leads us into all truth (John 16:13). Therefore, as we are taught by the Holy Spirit, we should always live in Christ, as the Holy Spirit guides us (1 John 2:27).
- (6) Jesus said that He would build His church on the revealed truth about Christ, who is the rock (1 Corinthians 10:4), and because of this, "the gates of Hades" will not overcome it (Matthew 16:18). Here, "the gates of Hades" refers to "the power of death" (Chokmah). The reason is that Jesus rose again from the dead. "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). God will receive us and save our souls from the power of death (Psalms 49:15).

“Friend, do what you came for.”

Judas Iscariot, after having made prior arrangements with the chief priests and elders and coordinating a signal, approached Jesus and greeted Him saying, "Rabbi," and kissed Him. At that moment, Jesus said to Judas, "Friend, do what you came for," and then they seized Jesus (Matthew 26:47-50, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflect on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) I believe that Judas' kiss of Jesus is the exact opposite of what is described in Psalms 2:12: "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way, for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him." The psalmist, when advising to kiss the Son—the anointed King (v. 2), the Messiah, who is God's Son (v. 12), meant to show honor and submission to Christ as a sign of reverence (Chokmah). However, Judas, in his disobedience, used the kiss as a sign of betrayal against Jesus instead of as a sign of submission.
- (2) As I reflect on Jesus calling Judas "Friend," I am reminded of what Jesus said in John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Korean Modern Bible). I believe that Jesus laid down His life even for Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him. This aligns with Matthew 5:44, where Jesus says, "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Korean New Translation).
- (3) In Matthew 26:50 (Korean Modern Bible), Jesus said to Judas, "Do what you came for, friend," knowing that what Judas intended to do was betray Him (v 46). Even though Jesus knew that His beloved disciple, Judas, would betray Him, He still said to him, "Do what you came for" with love. This brings to mind Genesis 24:42 (Korean Modern Bible): "I prayed this prayer at the well today: 'Lord, the God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success to the journey I am on.'" This refers to the servant of Abraham (v 2) obeying Abraham's command to go to Mesopotamia and choose a wife for Isaac, praying by the well outside the town where Nahor lived (vv 10-11). As he prayed, "If it is your will, please let this work out," his prayer was answered. However, Judas's intent was to betray Jesus, and this was part of God's plan (Ref.: vv. 39, 42). Therefore, Jesus said to Judas, "Do what you came for" (v. 50, Korean Modern Bible). The hymn "My Jesus, as Thou Wilt" was written by Benjamin Schmolck (1672-1737), a Lutheran pastor from Germany, during a time of intense suffering. In 1704, when Schmolck was 32, he returned home after visiting someone, only to find that his house had burned down, and his two sons were tragically killed in the fire. After crying out in despair, he had a vision of the Lord praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, leading him to write the hymn "Mein Jesu, wie du willst" ("My Jesus, as you will"). The final verse, "Whether I live or die, let it be according to Your will," is his faith confession (Internet).

Silence is when we listen only to the voice of God, whom we rely on, and humbly obey His words in faith.

The high priests and the Jewish council (Sanhedrin) sought evidence to condemn Jesus to death. Many people came forward and gave false testimony, but they could not find any substantial evidence. Finally, two people came forward and testified, saying, "This man claimed he could destroy God's temple and rebuild it in three days." The high priest stood up and asked Jesus, "Why do you not answer? What is this testimony these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent and did not respond (Matthew 26:59-63, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflected on this passage, several thoughts came to mind:

- (1) When I think of the high priests and the Jewish council seeking evidence to condemn Jesus, I believe this is the fulfillment of Jesus' words in Matthew 20:18: "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ..." (Korean Modern Bible). They wanted Jesus to be sentenced to death and crucified.

- (2) Apostle Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33, Korean Modern Bible), but he fled and then returned, following Jesus at a distance to see how things were unfolding (Matthew 26:56, 58). However, Apostle Paul not only felt as if he had been sentenced to death (2 Corinthians 1:9), but even though he had "done nothing deserving of death or imprisonment" (Acts 26:31, Korean Modern Bible), he actually ended up in the lowest position, like a prisoner on death row (1 Corinthians 4:9). When he was accused by Jews from Jerusalem of various crimes, he said, "If I am guilty of doing anything deserving of death, I do not refuse to die" (Acts 25:7, 11, Korean Modern Bible). The reason Apostle Paul could say this was because he relied not on himself, but solely on God, who raises the dead (2 Corinthians 1:9). God is the one who hears the groans of those imprisoned and frees those sentenced to death! (Ref.: Psalms 102:20).

- (3) When I reflect on the verse, "Many people came and gave false testimony, but they could not find any substantial evidence" (Matthew 26:60, Korean Modern Bible), I agree with the verse, "A false witness only tells lies" (Proverbs 12:17, Korean Modern Bible). What comes out of the heart of a false witness are "evil thoughts, murder, adultery, immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander" (Matthew 15:19, Korean Modern Bible). A person who gives false testimony is like someone who harms their neighbor with a club, a sword, or a sharp arrow (Proverbs 25:18). Those who oppose us will give false testimony against us (Ref.: Psalms 27:12). They will accuse us of things we did not even know about (Ref.: 35:11), and they will make false statements about us (Ref.: Proverbs 24:28). The Bible clearly says, "Do not give false testimony against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16, Korean Modern Bible). Those who give false testimony and falsely accuse the innocent will be punished by God (Ref.: Isaiah 29:21).

- (4) Many people gave false testimony, but the last two individuals provided testimony that could lead to substantial evidence against Jesus. Their testimony was, "This man said that he could destroy God's temple and rebuild it in three days" (Matthew 26:60-61, Korean Modern Bible). In fact, Jesus had said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (John 2:19, Korean Modern Bible). However, neither the Jews who heard these words (v 18) nor the two men who gave testimony against Jesus (Matthew 26:60) knew the truth: "The temple Jesus was referring to was His own body" (John 2:21, Korean Modern Bible) [Jesus' disciples did not remember this statement until after Jesus' death and resurrection, and only then did they believe in the Scriptures and the words Jesus had spoken (v 22)]. Therefore, both the two witnesses and the high priests and the Jewish council, as well as all the Jews who accused Jesus, believed that He had committed the sin of blasphemy against God's temple. The reason was that, in the Old Testament, the temple was the place where God's name dwelt, and when Jesus said to destroy the temple, it was seen as a blasphemy against the temple and, by extension, as a crime against God's name, which was considered sacrilege (Jeong-Hyun Lee).
- (5) Even though two people were giving unfavorable testimony about Jesus, He did not respond and remained silent (Matthew 26:62-63). Why did Jesus not defend Himself? Why did Jesus not explain that the temple He was referring to was not the actual building of the Jerusalem temple, but His own body? Why did Jesus keep silent? The answer is found in Isaiah 53:7 (Korean Modern Bible): "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth." Silence, though it involves not speaking to anyone, is 'listening to God' (Henry Nouwen). Silence is hearing the words of many false testimonies, criticisms, gossip, and misunderstandings of God's word, but it is also about hearing only the voice of the God we rely on (Ref.: 2 Corinthians 1:9, Korean Modern Bible) and humbly obeying His word with quiet faith.

Those who use the sword (gun) ...

All who use the sword (gun) will perish by the sword (gun)
(Ref.: Matthew 26:52, Korean Modern Bible).

The woman who pleaded with Jesus with great faith

After leaving Galilee, Jesus traveled to the region of Tyre and Sidon. He entered a house and wanted to remain unnoticed, but soon it became known (Mark 7:24). A Greek woman from Syrophenicia, whose young daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit ["an evil spirit" (Matthew 15:22, Korean Modern Bible)], heard about Jesus and immediately came and fell at His feet (Mark 7:25). She cried out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is severely possessed by an evil spirit" (Matthew 15:22, Korean Modern Bible), and she begged Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter (Mark 7:26). However, Jesus did not answer her at all, and His disciples came to Him and urged, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us" (Matthew 15:23, Korean Modern Bible). Jesus answered her, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (v. 24, Korean Modern Bible). The woman came and knelt before Him, saying, "Lord, help me" (v. 25, Korean Modern Bible). Jesus replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs" (Mark 7:27, Korean Modern Bible). She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs" (v. 28, Korean Modern Bible). Then Jesus said to her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter" (v. 29, Korean Modern Bible). "At that moment her daughter was healed" (Matthew 15:28, Korean Modern Bible). So, when the woman went home, she found her daughter lying on the bed, and the demon had already left (v. 30). As I meditate on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) The reason Jesus went to the region of Tyre and Sidon was probably because He entered a house and wanted to remain unnoticed (Mark 7:24). In other words, it seems that Jesus went there to take some rest. However, due to the rumors of Jesus (v. 25), it "became known" (v. 24, Korean Modern Bible), which suggests that Jesus had been constantly healing the sick and carrying out His ministry without a break. In my opinion, the only time Jesus was able to rest, even if just for a brief moment, was when He went to a "solitary place" to pray to God the Father (Ref.: Mark 1:35, 6:31; Luke 5:16).
- (2) When I think about the woman who immediately came after hearing about Jesus and fell at His feet, pleading with Him to cast out the demon from her daughter (Mark 7:25-26), I imagine that the woman's sighs, tears, and pain from having such a daughter must have been indescribably great. For the sake of her daughter's healing, she cast aside national animosities and personal pride, persistently appealing to Jesus with all her heart, longing for her daughter's salvation (Chokmah). I can somewhat understand this mother's feelings. The reason is that I, too, have experienced the same sense of longing, especially when my first daughter was dying and another daughter was suffering from mental illness to the point of wanting to die, during which I repeatedly pleaded with the Lord for their healing.
- (3) So, why did Jesus initially "not answer a word" (Matthew 15:23, Korean Modern Bible)? Why did Jesus remain silent? Jesus remained silent not only to this woman but also when He was accused by the high

- priests and elders (Matthew 27:12; Ref.: 26:62; Mark 14:61), when He was questioned by Herod (Luke 23:9), and when He was questioned by Pilate (Mark 15:4; John 19:9). Isaiah 53:7 in the Korean Modern Bible says: “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”
- (4) Then, Jesus’ disciples said to Him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us" (Matthew 15:23, Korean Modern Bible). Why did they say this? Why did the disciples, instead of feeling compassion for the woman whose daughter was possessed by an evil spirit (v. 22), say to Jesus, "Send her away"? Clearly, the disciples had heard her plea when she asked Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter (Mark 7:26). So why did they tell Jesus to "send her away"? Jesus is the one who casts out demons, so why didn't they ask Jesus to show compassion for her, but instead say, "Send her away"? "This statement came from the disciples' desire to quickly get rid of the annoying woman. Therefore, their intervention before the silent Jesus was not out of genuine sympathy for the woman but rather out of simple selfishness" (Chokmah).
- (5) Jesus said to the woman, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 15:24, Korean Modern Bible). This statement is a repetition of the command Jesus gave to His disciples, saying, “Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 10:6, Korean Modern Bible). It speaks to the mission Jesus was entrusted with. However, this does not mean that the gospel of salvation is limited to the Jews. Jesus focused on His ministry to the Jews, but He also gave His disciples the mission to go to Samaria and to the ends of the earth to evangelize. Therefore, His disciples must continue to diligently carry out the mission of evangelism, following Jesus' example (John 10:16; Acts 1:8) (Chokmah).
- (6) When the woman came and knelt before Jesus, saying, “Lord, help me” (Matthew 15:25, Korean Modern Bible), the first verse of the hymn “Jesus, My Lord to Thee I Cry” comes to mind: “Jesus, my Lord to Thee I cry; Unless Thou help me I must die: Oh, bring Thy free salvation nigh, And take me as I am.” I also recall the words from Psalms 121:1-2: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Korean Modern Bible).
- (7) Jesus said to the woman, “First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.” She replied, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs” (Mark 7:27-28, Korean Modern Bible). Here, the “children” refer to the Jews, and the “dogs” refer to the Gentiles, whom the Jews looked down upon. Yet, this Gentile woman called Jesus “Lord” and agreed with Him. In other words, she acknowledged both the priority and special rights of the Jews, as well as her own humble status ("dog") (Chokmah). Furthermore, she said that even “the dogs under the table” — lowly Gentiles like herself — eat the crumbs that fall from the children. “The fact that she accepts the personal humiliation and damage to her dignity implied by calling herself a 'dog' without

being offended and humbly begs for the Lord's grace is a sign of extreme humility. The contrast between this humility and the Jews' arrogant sense of superiority highlights the woman's great faith" (Chokmah).

- (8) Jesus said to her, "Your faith is great! Be it done for you as you wish." And "her daughter was healed at that moment" (Matthew 15:28, Korean Modern Bible). "Here, 'faith' includes her trust, confidence, modesty, and patience" (Chochmah). With such great faith, the woman who begged Jesus did as she wished, and Jesus cast out the demon from her daughter (Mark 7:26, 29). When she returned home, the demon had gone out and her little daughter was lying in bed (v. 30).

Those who are blessed by God the Father

Those who are blessed by God the Father
will inherit the kingdom prepared for them
from the creation of the world
(Ref.: Matthew 25:34).

'Whether it is a terrifying and difficult thing like a great wildfire, My soul is always at peace, my soul, my soul is at peace ~'

Jesus had been teaching the crowd by the sea, using parables, and when evening came, He said to His disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the sea" (Mark 4:1-2, Korean Modern Bible). So, the disciples left the crowd and set out in the boat with Jesus. But suddenly, a fierce storm arose, and the waves began to swamp the boat, causing it to fill with water. However, Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples, terrified, woke Him and cried out, "Teacher, don't You care if we drown?" Jesus got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down, and it was completely calm. He said to His disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!" (Mark 4:35-41, Korean Modern Bible). As I reflect on this passage, several thoughts come to mind:

- (1) When I read the passage about how the boat with the disciples and Jesus was caught in a "sudden great storm" and the waves overwhelmed the boat, causing it to nearly sink (Mark 4:37, Korean Modern Bible), I was reminded of the story of the prophet Jonah. In Jonah's case, a "great wind" sent by God caused a "great storm" that nearly broke apart the ship he was on (Jonah 1:4). I also thought about the wildfires I learned about on Wednesday morning. For instance, a wildfire broke out not far from my neighborhood, and the wind was so strong that the fire kept spreading. As of now, it is still only 0% contained, and many homes and buildings have burned down to ashes, with reports of fatalities. The year 2025 has begun with significant hardship (great disaster). Just like this, our journey in life can suddenly be filled with great difficulties.
- (2) As I reflect further on the passage where the boat the disciples were in with Jesus was about to sink (Mark 4:37), I vaguely remember about 22 years ago during a retreat at the Ansan Retreat Center in Korea, where the late Pastor Han-eum Ok used a boat to symbolize the Korean church during the Church Pastors' Renewal Association retreat. He said something along the lines of, "If the leaders of our church lower their standards, the Korean church will sink like this boat." I remember him saying that if the church leaders lower the bar, the church will face destruction, just like a sinking boat. Perhaps that's why, while I was taking photos and videos of the wildfire and sharing them with people online and via KakaoTalk, I suddenly thought of the lyrics from the praise song "Revival" that we sang during last Wednesday's service (https://youtu.be/P2ZkvRqUHVI?si=AaCILCU-5_hlSRij) and Sunday service: "Let the flames of revival rise up," "Holy Spirit, blow the wind ..." As I witnessed the crisis of this great disaster, I prayed that the Holy Spirit would blow upon our church leaders and ignite the flames of revival. I continue to pray this today. Our conviction is that true revival, which is sparked by the Holy Spirit, begins with repentance. Leaders like me in the church must tear our hearts and return to God (Ref.:

- Joel 2:13). [Repentance, Reconciliation, Restoration, Reformation, Revival. Without repentance, reconciliation, restoration, reformation, and revival are meaningless!].
- (3) As I reflect on the verse where Jesus was sleeping with His head on a cushion in the back of the boat, even though the boat was about to sink (Mark 4:38), I remembered something my beloved wife said to me yesterday. Usually, my wife sleeps well, while I have trouble sleeping. However, on Tuesday night, there was such a strong wind (probably the Santa Ana winds, blowing at 95-112 km/h?) that it felt like our house was shaking. Despite that, my wife said that I slept really well. Haha. I found it hard to believe at first, but I thanked the Lord for giving me a deep sleep during that time. As I read and reflect on Mark 4:38 today, I think that, no matter how difficult the situation, we should be able to sleep peacefully like Jesus, who had perfect peace in His heart. We must have the peace that only the Lord can give, even in times of great difficulty. I pray that the Lord will grant this peace to all of us living here in Southern California, where the wildfires are causing so much distress.
- (4) When the boat was about to sink, Jesus was peacefully sleeping, but it seems that His disciples were filled with fear of death. So, I believe they woke Jesus, shouting, "Teacher, we're going to die! Do you not care?" (Mark 4:38, Korean Modern Bible). But did Jesus really ignore His disciples? Of course not! How could God, who loves His disciples, possibly ignore them? He never would! Our God is not ignoring His children, who are currently facing great difficulty due to the wildfires. However, like the disciples of Jesus, if we are also caught up in the fear of death, we can easily misunderstand the Lord. The Bible clearly tells us that our Lord is "Immanuel" (which means "God is with us") (Matthew 1:23), so why are we not able to overcome the fear of death with the faith of Immanuel?
- (5) Our Immanuel Lord, being the Almighty Creator God, rebuked the wind and commanded the sea, saying, "Peace, be still!" And as a result, both the wind and the sea obeyed, and the wind ceased, and the sea became completely calm (Mark 4:39, 41). In this way, our Lord, through great difficulties in our lives, when we lose our peace and our hearts are stirred by great storms and waves, says to us, "Peace be with you" (Ref.: 20:19). He calms the stormy waves and winds of our hearts, bringing peace and serenity to our souls (Ref.: Psalms 131:2). May this great blessing be upon God's children who are facing great difficulties due to the wildfires.
- (6) Jesus, who calmed the great storm and waves, asked His disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40, Korean Modern Bible). I believe that Jesus was pointing out that the disciples' unbelief made their souls uneasy, causing them to live in fear of death. In reality, if we do not fully trust the Lord and continue to question and doubt, our souls will not be quietly focused on Him alone. As a result, we may allow the great storms and waves in our hearts to overwhelm us in times of difficulty. We need to listen carefully to the words in Isaiah 30:15 (Korean Modern Bible): "The

Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says, 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.'

- (7) The disciples of Jesus were extremely afraid. The reason for their fear was because they were astonished at who Jesus was—who else could make even the wind and the sea obey Him? (Mark 4:41). This shows that they did not fully understand who their Teacher, Jesus, was. Because of this, they could not trust Him as they should. Even though Jesus was with them on the boat, they failed to sleep peacefully like He did, filled with fear of death instead. This is not how we should be. No matter the circumstances, we should be able to sing praises to God in faith, saying, " When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, 'It is well, it is well with my soul.' It is well with my soul; It is well, it is well with my soul" (Hymn " When Peace, Like a River, Attendeth My Way," verse 1 and refrain).

[\[https://youtu.be/EQpiiI1Hd64?si=Z-BepQenWar_9X8N\]](https://youtu.be/EQpiiI1Hd64?si=Z-BepQenWar_9X8N)

Many are invited to the banquet in the kingdom of heaven, but ...

Many are invited to the banquet in the kingdom of heaven,
but few are chosen, and those invited are not qualified
(Ref.: Matthew 22:8, 14, Korean Modern Bible)

**If we think about human matters instead of God's work,
we will inevitably stumble.**

Peter said to Jesus, "Even if all the others fall away, I will never abandon You." Jesus replied to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." But Peter insisted, "Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You." And all the other disciples said the same (Matthew 26:33-35, Korean Modern Bible). When I meditate on this passage, I have a few thoughts:

- (1) The word "never" is something we should never say. Haha.
- (2) Jesus' use of the word "truly" indicates that His words will "surely" come to pass.
- (3) Even though Peter claimed, "Even if I have to die with You, I will never deny You," he actually did deny Jesus three times, just as Jesus had said. When we focus on human matters instead of God's work, we will inevitably fall (see Matthew 16:23).

**"Heaven and earth will pass away,
but My words will never pass away."**

Jesus clearly said:

"Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly
not pass away until all these things have happened.

Heaven and earth will pass away,
but My words will never pass away"

(Matthew 24:34-35, Korean Modern Bible).

It is very important to teach "repentance."

Jesus went around teaching in various villages and also called the twelve disciples, sending them out two by two, giving them the authority to drive out evil spirits. So, the disciples went out, preaching repentance, driving out many demons, and anointing many sick people with oil to heal them (Mark 6:6-7, 12-13). When I meditate on this passage, I think of a few things:

- (1) The importance of teaching ministry. Jesus taught and continued to teach (Matthew 4:23, 7:28, 9:35, 13:54, 21:23, 26:55; Mark 1:22, 4:2, 6:6, 34, 9:31; 13:35, 14:49; Luke 4:32, 5:17, 6:6, 13:10, 22, 19:47, 20:1; 21:37; John 6:59, 7:28, 8:20). Jesus' teaching was not His own, but was from God who sent Him (John 7:16). Pastors must teach God's Word (Acts 18:11). Pastors should diligently read the Bible, exhort, and teach without ceasing (Acts 5:42; 1 Timothy 4:13). Pastors should set an example in everything by doing good works, and when they teach, they should do so with purity, sincerity, and words that are beyond reproach (Titus 2:7-8). Believers who hear the right words from their pastors should practice the truth they have heard (2 Timothy 1:13). Jesus' words: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).
- (2) When reflecting on the words that the twelve disciples, who were given the power to cast out evil spirits by Jesus, went out and preached "Repent!" (Mark 6:7, 12, Korean Modern Bible), I remember that John the Baptist also preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matthew 3:2), and Jesus also preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (4:17). What came to mind was that, following the grace and guidance from God, I began dividing a book titled "May the Fire of Revival Ignite in Our Family" into five parts. I shared writings on Bible meditation in each part on my Naver blog by copying and pasting them, with Part 1 being "Repentance." I believe this is not a coincidence. I believe the Lord wants me to first repent, return to God, and do works worthy of repentance (Acts 26:20), and through this book, deliver the message of 'Repent!' to our families.
- (3) When reflecting on the words that the twelve disciples, who were empowered to cast out evil spirits, went out and preached "Repent!" (Mark 6:7, 12, Korean Modern Bible), but some people did not welcome them or listen to their message (v. 11), I remembered the passage from Acts 7:55-58, where Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. When he shouted, "Look! I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" the Jews covered their ears, shouted at the top of their voices, and all rushed at him, dragging him out of the city to stone him. Even now, there are not only people who do not listen to the word of

God preached by the pastor, but also people whose hearts are blocked due to worries of this world and temptations regarding wealth (Matthew 13:22). Additionally, there may be church members who refuse to listen to the word, harden their hearts, and metaphorically throw stones at the pastor who is preaching.