

Following Jesus

James Kim

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Introduction

“When we walk with the Lord In the light of His Word, What a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will He abides with us still, And with all who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey” (Hymn “When We Walk With the Lord, v. 1).

I want to follow Jesus. I want to hear the voice of the Shepherd Jesus and follow Him only (Jn. 10:3-5). Even though the way Jesus went is the way of the cross and the rough road of Golgotha, I want to deny myself and take up my cross and follow Jesus (Mt. 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23). I want to walk the narrow path that Jesus walked rather than the wide path of this world. I want to walk by faith rather than by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). And I want to walk that one path to the end by faith silently. I don't want to lean left or right. I don't want to go this way and that way and be hesitant. I want to fix my eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12:2), who is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6), and open my ears wide in order to listen to His voice and follow only the words of Jesus. Even if I see no evidence in my eyes, I want to always walk by faith only. I want to hold on to the word of promise that Jesus gave me and be driven by it and live obediently to His word. “I will go forth when You say. I will stop if it's not Your will. It depends on Your will, whether I will go or stop. Oh Lord God, please lead me to Your way. Where You want me to be, I want to be there with You. I will obey Your command and will live as You lead me. Even with my weak soul, may You work through me for the sake of the Lord's Kingdom and His will. Oh Lord God, please lead me to Your way.”

The year 2013 motto for Victory Presbyterian Church, where I am serving by the grace of God, was “Following Jesus.” I wanted all the church members to live a life of following Jesus more closely. So I set the motto “Following Jesus” and meditated on the Gospel of Matthew for that year. I selected some of those meditated verses and compiled a book under the title of “Following Jesus.” Although this book lacks a lot, I want to share with the hope that it will be of some help to the brothers and sisters in Christ who want to follow Jesus.

Struggling to follow Jesus,

James Kim

(June 2018, in Victory Shepherd's Room)

Jesus calling us (1)

[Mathew 4:18-22]

We all want to live a life that follows Jesus more closely. May we all write “Follow Jesus” on the tablet of our hearts. What must we do to follow Jesus? As we meditate on Matthew 4:18-22, we would like to receive the lesson that God gives us by meditating on the scene where Jesus calls Peter and his brother Andrew, and James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.

Look at Matthew 4:19 – “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” This is the word Jesus said to the fishermen when he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting their nets into the sea while he was walking on the shores of Galilee (v. 18). As I meditated on these words, I divided them into two categories. (1) It is Jesus’ calling. Jesus called Peter and Andrew, “Follow me.” (2) It is Jesus’ promise. That promise is, “I will make you fishers of men.” What do you think of this call and promise of Jesus? As I meditated on these words, I thought that Jesus is giving us a higher calling. In other words, Jesus gave Peter and Andrew the higher calling. Peter and Andrew were Galilean fishermen, who had a job of catching fish in the Sea of Galilee, whom Jesus had promised to make them fishers of men (vv. 18-19)

Jesus is calling you, “Follow me.” Jesus is giving you a higher calling. Jesus is giving you the higher calling than your job. Jesus is calling you to be fishers of men. Jesus wants to save the dying souls by using us to share His gospel. And Jesus wants to save those souls and make them His disciples through you. How should we respond to this call of Jesus? See the reaction of Peter and his brother Andrew: “At once they left their nets and followed him” (v. 20). And see the reaction of James the son of Zebedee and his brother John: “and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him” (v. 22). They immediately left their nets, their boats, or even their father, and followed Jesus. We, too, must immediately leave everything behind at the call of Jesus and follow Him. Therefore, I hope and pray that all of us will become fishers of men according to the promise of Jesus.

Jesus calling us (2)

[Matthew 4:18-22]

We all need to live a life that follows Jesus closer and closer. I would like to learn a lesson by thinking about two things.

First, what must we do to follow Jesus?

We must hear the voice of Jesus calling us: "... Come, follow me ... and I will make you fishers of men" (Mt. 4:19). This is what Jesus said to the fishermen when he saw them casting their nets (v. 18). When Jesus called them, he gave them a word of promise. The word of that promise is, "I will make you fishers of men" (v. 19).

Jesus is giving us a higher calling. We can know this by looking at the fact that when Jesus called Peter and Andrew, who were fishermen by profession (v. 18), he promised to make them fishers of men (v. 19). Jesus is calling you to "follow me." Jesus is giving you a higher calling. Jesus is giving you the higher calling than your job. Jesus is calling you to be fishers of men. He wants to use you to save dying souls by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we hear the voice of Jesus saying to us, "Follow me," we must immediately leave behind the things we should leave behind and follow Jesus. Peter and Andrew immediately left their nets and followed Jesus (v. 20). James and John immediately left the boat and their father and followed Jesus (v. 22).

Second, how should we follow Jesus? What is the life of following Jesus?

(1) The life of following Jesus is to live as the salt of the world and taste its saltiness in this world.

Look at Matthew 5:13 – "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men." The role of salt is to flavor food and also to keep food from spoiling. Likewise, we must, as the salt of the world, live a life that is flavored with the gospel of Jesus Christ in this world and that also prevents corruption in this

society. To do that, we must not only preach the gospel of Jesus Christ with our lips, but also live a life worthy of the gospel with our lives.

(2) The life of following Jesus is living as the light of the world, illuminating the light of good deeds in this world.

Look at Matthew 5:14-16: “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Jesus is telling us, “In the same way, let your light shine before men.” Just as people light a lamp and put it on its stand, not under the bowl, so that it can shine on everyone in the house, so Jesus' disciples should let their light shine before people in this world. Here, the light we need to shine on the people of the world is good deeds (v. 16). We, as the light of the world, shine our good deeds into the world, so that the world may see our good deeds and glorify our Heavenly Father. I have thought of this good deeds in three ways:

(a) Good deeds are living a life of conformity in words and deeds.

Look at Matthew 5:19 – “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

(b) Good deeds are living a life of love.

What is life of love? It is not to be angry with our brothers (v. 22). And the life of loving our brothers is to be at peace with them (vv. 23-24). And the life of love is not only to love our brothers but also our enemies (vv. 43-44). As Christians, we should not only love those whom we love (v. 46). Such love is a love that even non-believers know how to do (v. 47). We must love our enemies just as Jesus loved such enemies and sinners like us.

(c) Good deeds are living holy lives.

Look at Matthew 5:27-28: “You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” We are God's holy people. Therefore, we must be holy just as God is holy. And in that holy life there must be no adultery (v. 27). In the Old Testament, God commanded not to commit adultery. But in

the New Testament, Jesus says that anyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart (v. 28).

Today, Jesus is calling you through this word of God. Jesus is telling you, "Follow me." And Jesus is giving you the promise: "I will make you fishers of men." Jesus is telling you, "You are the salt of the world" and "the light of the world." We must taste the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we must shine the light of Jesus Christ in this dark world. We need to let the world see our good deeds, as Jesus commands, so that they may glorify our Heavenly Father. I hope and pray that all of us will live a life of conformity in words and deeds, a life of love and a holy life.

Eight blessings (1): The blessing of the poor in spirit

[Matthew 5:3]

Are you happy? Part-time job recruitment portal Albamon, operated by Job Korea, recently conducted a survey of 391 college students on the subject of 'happiness' and announced the result. Looking at the announced result, the most important conditions for happiness, 'gratitude and a positive mind' took the first place with 29.1%, followed by 'health (16.6%)', 'wealth and economic power (15.0%)'. And when the happiness score was given for each response that selected the conditions for happiness, 'religious life' took the first place with 75.3 points out of 100, followed by 'the person you love (67.7 points)' and third place was 'thanksgiving' (66.5 points), while the respondent group who chose 'wealth' recorded the lowest score with 50.7 points (internet). What makes you feel happy? The more I live a Christian life, the more I realize how happy I am to have all my sins forgiven and saved through the death of Jesus on the cross. Look at Deuteronomy 33:29a – “Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD?” The reason we are happy is because through Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, our sins are forgiven, we are justified (Rom. 4:6-8), and we are saved. We are the happiest and the most blessed people in the world.

Today's text Matthew 5:1-12 is the famous Beatitudes. Jesus was talking about the eight kinds of blessing. This is the first part (Mt. 5:1-12) of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. chs. 5-7), a lesson that Jesus taught to his disciples and the gathered crowd on the mountain (5:1-2). Today, I would like to receive a lesson from the Lord while meditating on the first of these Beatitudes, “The blessing of the poor in spirit”.

Look at Matthew 5:3 – “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The first blessing that Jesus taught his disciples and the assembled crowd is “the kingdom of heaven.” Do you believe in the existence of “heaven”? Gallup, the most authoritative polling agency in the United States, asked the American people: “Do you believe in the existence of heaven?” As a result, about 80% of people said “yes”. The proportion of those who answered this way was almost the same for both Christians and non-Christians. However, when Gallup Korea asked the Korean people the same question, only about 33.9% of non-Christians answered “yes” and 41.1% of Christians answered “yes”. That means 58.9% of Korean Christians do not believe in the existence of heaven (Internet). In other words, the kingdom of heaven Jesus spoke of in the Gospel of Matthew today is “the kingdom of God.” In other words, heaven and the kingdom of God are the same word. In today's text, Matthew 5:3,

the author Matthew did not say “the kingdom of God” but “the kingdom of heaven” because he was writing the Gospel of Matthew to the Jews, and the Jews tended to avoid using God’s name directly. However, Mark and Luke wrote “The Kingdom of God” because the Gospels of Mark and Luke were written to Gentiles, not Jews (Wood).

What do we usually think of when we hear “the kingdom of God” or “heaven”? Perhaps we think of “heaven” as the place we enter after we die. For example, in Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is where those who do the will of God the Father in heaven enter. In other words, those who do the will of the Father of God in heaven here refers to those who do God’s work. And those who do the works of God believe in those whom God has sent (Jn. 6:29). In a word, those who believe in Jesus will enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, in today’s text Matthew 5:3, we can say that the first blessing that Jesus teaches us, the kingdom of heaven, is the place where we enter through faith in Jesus. There will be no more tears, no more death or mourning, or crying or pain in heaven (Rev. 21:4). And there will no longer be any curse and any night, and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun (22:3, 5). This kingdom of heaven is referred to in the Book of Revelation as “a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1) or “the holy city, New Jerusalem” (v. 2). In the future, when we who believe in Jesus enter this kingdom of heaven, then we will see the Lord face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). Although now we know in part, then we will know fully, as the Lord knows us (v. 12). If we go to heaven like this, we think of it as a place where the saints who believe in Jesus will enter in the future. But the Bible does not speak of heaven or the kingdom of God only as a place we will enter in the future. The Bible also says that the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God has already come upon us: “But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (Lk. 11:20). Not only that, but Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you” (17:21). The background of this word of Jesus is that when the Pharisees asked Jesus, “When will the kingdom of God come?” (v. 20), Jesus answered, “The kingdom of God does not come with sight, but it is here and there. After saying that Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you” (v. 21). When these words are put together, “heaven” or “the kingdom of God” does not only refer to the place where those who believe in Jesus will enter, but that it has already come to us and the kingdom of God is within us. Therefore, we Christians should think of “Heaven” or “Kingdom of God” only as a concept of place and not only in a future-oriented way. That means that when we talk about “heaven,” we should think in terms of “Who?” rather than just “Where?” or “When?” Here, even from the perspective of “Who?,” the word that one should think of heaven or the kingdom of God refers to Jesus. In other words, when we speak of heaven or the kingdom of God, we should think of the King of that kingdom, Jesus. Jesus already dwells in us through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). That means that the King Jesus reigns over us. Therefore, the kingdom of God (heaven) has already come within us. In other words, the inside of us is heaven and the kingdom of God. Also, the Christian family who believes in Jesus is the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. The reason is because the Lord is with our family. So is the church. After all, the kingdom of heaven (the kingdom of God) is our heart, our home, and our church where the Lord, the King of kings, reigns. These individuals, families, and churches keep the twofold commandment of Jesus, love of God and love of neighbor. As a result, our hearts, our families, and our church will be transformed into heaven.

Jesus said that this wonderful first blessing, the kingdom of heaven, is “theirs” (Mt. 5:3). Here “theirs” refers to “the poor in spirit.” Then the question we have to ask here is who are the poor in spirit whom Jesus spoke of. Who do you think the poor in spirit refer to? Here, the poor in spirit means spiritual poverty. In other words, the poor in spirit are those who feel spiritual need in the very inner part of the soul, such as the personal bone marrow. Here, those who feel spiritual need refer to three people (Yun-sun Park):

- (1) Those who feel spiritual need know that they are unable to help and that there is no one to help but God (Isa. 61:1, Ps. 69:29, 70:5, 74:21, 86:1-6; Zep 3 :12).

Look at Psalms 70:5 – “Yet I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay.” The psalmist, who longs for the Lord's help and deliverance, says that he is poor and needy. Such a person as the psalmist is spiritually poor and poor in spirit.

- (2) Those who feel spiritual need are the ones who are persecuted by the arrogant because they lead a life opposite to the arrogant before God (Ps. 37:14, 86:14).

Look at Psalms 37:14 – “The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright.” Those who are spiritually needy are those who have become poor and needy because of the persecution and tribulation of the wicked. Then why do the wicked persecute the spiritually needy? It is because the spiritually needy is an honest man.

- (3) Those who feel spiritual need are those who are heartbroken over their sins and repent (Isa. 66:2; Ps. 34:6, 18; 51:17).

Look at Psalms 34:18 – “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” Look at Psalms 51:17 – “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” A person who is spiritually poor is a person with a broken heart and a contrite heart.

Such people are the poor in spirit. Unlike the Pharisees at the time of Jesus, these poor in spirit are those who know that they have no righteousness and seek God's help and forgiveness. In other words, the poor in spirit refer to those who have discovered that man has no righteousness in the sight of God, not his humility toward others (Park). These are those who not only know that there is no hope without the grace of God, but are acutely aware that they have lost their way. These are the ones who know they are completely spiritually bankrupt without God (MacArthur). Therefore, those who are poor in spirit know that they desperately need the righteousness of God. Unlike the Pharisees, who were self-sufficient, the poor in spirit only know that they do not have their own righteousness, so they know that they can come before God only by putting on the righteousness of God.

As we already know, the Pharisees in Jesus' day believed that they could be justified by doing the law. So they tried to keep the law thoroughly. As a result, the righteousness they obtain is not the righteousness that comes from God, but the self-righteousness obtained by human merit. In the end, the righteousness that comes from such a human being can only result in the Pharisees themselves boasting of their deeds not only before men but even before God, and despise those who do not do so. A good example is the parable of Jesus in Luke 18:10-13. Of the two men in the parable, the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray, and stood apart from the publican and prayed. According to the contents of his prayer, he was nothing but boasting about his deeds before God. Look at Luke 18:11-12: "The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'" But the tax collector went up to the temple and prayed to God: "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner'" (v. 13). What do you think of this tax collector's prayer? Isn't this tax collector the poor in spirit? This tax collector, who knows that he has nothing to show for his own righteousness (merit), pleads with God to have mercy on him (v. 14).

We can be justified only through faith in Jesus Christ. Look at Galatians 2:16 – "know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." The Bible clearly states that no one can be justified by observing the law. The Bible clearly states that we can be justified through faith in Jesus Christ alone. And the Bible says that the righteous who are justified through faith in Jesus Christ live by faith alone (Hab 2:4; Rom. 1:17). The righteous who live by faith have received God's gift of eternal life in our Lord (Rom. 3:23). The righteous who believe in Jesus and are justified have received the kingdom of heaven (eternal life) as a gift from God. Wouldn't you like to receive this gift from God too? Look at Acts 16:31 – "They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved -- you and your household."

Eight blessings (2): The blessing of those who mourn

[Matthew 5:4]

What or who comforts you when you are sad and heartbroken? In Robert Strand's book, 'The Spirituality of Comfort,' in the foreword, Henry Nouwen says, 'The care of the soul is being with you (Strand). How many people around us need this kind of care? There must be at least one or two people around us who desperately need a comforter who prays to God as an intercessor and a ministry of comfort that weeps together when we cry together with the love of Christ. But personally, I think that when we are suffering and lonely, we also need to refuse to be comforted by those around us. The reason is to realize that God wants to be with us. The reason is to remind us again that only God is the true Comforter of our souls.

We have already read Matthew 5:1-12 and meditated on the blessing of the poor in spirit, the first of the Beatitudes that Jesus taught. If we review the meditated words again, it is that the poor in spirit are those who are spiritually poor, that is, those who feel spiritual need, and the blessing they receive is the kingdom of heaven. Here, we should not think of the blessing of heaven as only a concept of place and time, but think of it from the perspective of the Lord, the King of kings who rules and reigns over the kingdom of God. In other words, we learned that we should not think of the kingdom of heaven only as a place we will enter after we die. But we must remember that the individual saints, their families, and the church they serve are also heaven and the kingdom of God. We have learned three things about who the poor in spirit, that is, those who feel spiritual need, who receive this heavenly blessing: (1) Those who feel spiritual need know that they are unable to help and that there is no one to help but God. (2) Those who feel spiritual need are the ones who are persecuted by the arrogant because they lead a life opposite to the arrogant before God. (3) Those who feel spiritual need are those who are heartbroken over their sins and repent. In particular, in this third part, there is a Bible verse we need to meditate on again. This is what the Bible Psalms 34:18 and 51:17 say: "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (34:18), "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (51:17). The reason we meditate on these two verses again is because they have to do with the second blessing we will meditate on today, the blessing of those who mourn (Mt.5:4).

Look at Matthew 5:4 – “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Do you remember when you looked back on your life and cried (weeping) because it was so sad and painful? If so, then why did you weep so much? What was the reason? In Jerusalem, Israel, as we are familiar with it, there is a place called the “Wailing Wall”. Do you know why the name is Wailing Wall? The Wailing Wall is said to be the most holy place among the Jews. The official name of the wall is “Western Wall” and the reason it is called the Wailing Wall is because there is a story behind it. The story is that after the temple built by King Solomon was burnt down twice by Roman soldiers. The remaining wall was the western wall, and the Romans expelled the Jews to prevent them from returning to Jerusalem. They were sold into slavery in the Middle East and scattered for about 1,870 years, becoming a nomadic people who traveled from one country to another (Diaspora). After that, when Jerusalem came under Byzantine rule, the Jews begged to grant their one wish, that they could gather at the 'Western Wall', the only relic of Solomon's Temple, to worship at least once a year. This petition was eventually granted, and Jews from all over the world gathered every year to worship at the 'Western Wall' in August, when the temple was destroyed, and couldn't help but cry as they thought about their fate. In particular, the western wall was the place where Abraham, the ancestor of the Jews, wanted to sacrifice his son Isaac according to God's command, and the place where King Solomon built the temple. It is said that the annual Jerusalem worship service at the western wall had no choice but to reach the Wailing Sea. But the reason to weep even more is that the temple built by King Solomon was gone, but there were two large mosques. From the point of view of the Jews, there could be no reason to weep. After World War II, East Jerusalem with the “Wailing Wall” belonged to Jordan, and Muslims banned even the annual Jewish worship here. So Jews were not allowed to set foot there for 19 years from 1948 to 1967. Then, when the ‘Six Day War’ broke out in 1967, the Israeli army dispatched special paratroopers to take over the ‘Wailing Wall’. It is said that it is because of the “Wailing Wall” here that Israel does not yield to the East Jerusalem Bay even if it dies, even though Israel has re-released the ‘Sinai Peninsula’, ‘Gaza Strip’ and ‘West Bank’ that it occupied in this war. So, before Israel's independence, Jews say they greeted each other when they parted: ‘Next year in Jerusalem.’ This greeting means ‘See you next year at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem’ (Internet). As I learned more from this Wailing Wall, I remembered when the foundation of God's temple in Jerusalem was laid (Ezra 3:8, 10), the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud (v. 12). I thought about why the older priests, Levites, and the family heads wept aloud while many others shouted with joy (v. 12). This thought came to me: ‘If the 38th parallel that divides North and South Korea is broken and South and North Korea are reunited, then the older people who have been through the Korean War will shed tears of emotion. But the younger generations who have not experienced the Korean War will shout with joy.’

As I look back on my life, I think there was only one time when I cried out loud. At that time, as I wept, I thought that people might run out of breath. I cried so loudly that it took my breath away. The reason I wept and cried so much at that time was because my first baby, Charis, who I held for the first time and last time, died in my arms. Even after that, the reason I was sad and heartbroken thinking about my first child was because I thought that the baby's death was due to my own sins. The words that came to mind at that time were the stories in 2 Samuel 12. In verse 14 of God's message to David by sending the prophet Nathan after David had betrayed, Bathsheba, the wife

of Uriah, a loyal soldier, verse 14 says: “But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.” And as promised, David's child died on the seventh day (v. 18). So, as a result of my sins, I had no choice but to weep loudly as I thought that my first child Charis had died.

But isn't it interesting? In today's text, Matthew 5:4, Jesus is saying that blessed are those who mourn. Those who mourn whom Jesus is talking about here refer to those who mourn and suffer for their sins against God, and those who are contrite for their own sins (Park). The Apostle Paul referred to this contrition as God's sorrow in 2 Corinthians 7:10. And he said that sorrow and mourning according to God's will accomplish repentance that leads to salvation. Such mourning is different from worldly mourning (v. 10). Worldly mourning does not produce repentance that leads to salvation. That is why Paul said that he was glad that he had grieved them in a letter to the Corinthians. What was the reason? Look at 2 Corinthians 7:9a – “yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance.” The reason Paul rejoiced that he grieved the Corinthian church members by letter was that their sorrow led to repentance. This is God's intention to give us mourning. This is to mourn according to God's will (v. 9b). I remember the lyrics of the hymn “My Soul in Sad Exile” verse 1: “My soul in sad exile was out on life's sea, So burdened with sin and distressed, Till I heard a sweet voice saying ‘Make me your choice’; And I entered the ‘Heaven of Rest.’” Although I don't fully understand the lyrics, one thing that is certain is this: It is our own sins that we too have to worry about in this world. Because of our sins, our hearts are heavy and we cannot help but suffer. And I think that this kind of heaviness and suffering is God's grace and blessing. The reason is that when our hearts are heavy and troubled because of our sins, we can humbly look to Jesus, who shed His blood on the cross, with faith. As we look at Jesus who died on the cross, we will mourn and not repent. In fact, how many times have we habitually confessed and repented of our sins to God, without any burden or pain in our hearts, because we so lightly regard our sins? I met a person a while ago and after talking for about 4 hours, I wrote this post on my personal website thinking about that person the next day: ‘A life at the bottom, a hard and weary life, a life with many tears, a life that has lost the will to live, a life with no future in sight, a dark and dark life, a life with no hope to live, return to the Lord’ In fact, from the point of view of unbelievers, that person is living a life of the bottom line, with no hope of living. In other words, from the world's point of view, the person would have no choice but to say that he met a crisis in his life. But I told him that this crisis is an opportunity. What kind of opportunity? This is his opportunity to return to the Lord. When I think of that beloved soul, I remembered the words of Psalms 32:4 – “For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;” Just as the psalmist David said that after he sinned against God, when he didn't confess his sin and repent, the hand of the Lord was on him day and night, it occurred to me that the Lord is pressing upon him to turn to Him to repent of his sins and return to Him. Therefore, this pressing of the Lord is a blessing. It is God's grace and blessing that our hearts are heavy because the Lord presses upon us.

Then, what is the blessing of those who mourn that Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5:4? That blessing is “comforted”. Look at Matthew 5:4 again: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Blessed are those who mourn for their sins. That blessing is comfort. So, what comfort is Jesus talking about here? That

comfort is the forgiveness of sins and the comfort of salvation (MacArthur). Look at Isaiah 40:1-2: “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.” The blessing received by those who mourn for their sins is comfort, and the comfort is the forgiveness of their sins. So the psalmist David said in Psalms 32:1-2: “Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.” Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed are those who are not condemned by God. It is by the grace of God that we who believe in Jesus have our sins forgiven in Jesus Christ, and we are free from condemnation by God. Look at Romans 8:1-2: “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” There is no condemnation for us, who have been justified through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16). In Jesus Christ, all our sins are forgiven, and there is no more condemnation for us. We are set free from all our sins. We are no longer slaves to sin. We are the Lord's servants and servants of righteousness. Nevertheless, there are countless times when we sin against God because we live for the world (the kingdom of Satan) and the injustices of this world rather than seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Each time we have to lose heart to ourselves because of the sins we have committed against God. When we look at ourselves, the sins we practice over and over can even make us feel hopeless. But the indwelling Holy Spirit makes us yearn for the Lord in that despair. Why? The reason is that our Lord is a God who comforts the downcast (2 Cor.7:6). Therefore, the Holy Spirit comforts us by making us look to the God who comforts those who are downcast. The Holy Spirit pierces our conscience with the sword of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and not only makes us aware of our sins, but also allows us to confess our sins. And the Holy Spirit makes us mourn and repent. As a result, we believe that our sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ and give us the assurance that we have been forgiven by God. Therefore, even if we fall seven times, the Lord will give us the grace to raise us up again (Prov. 24:16).

Today we received a message from Jesus. The message is, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Mt.5:4). What should we do? Let's all sing the hymn “Hover O'er me, Holy Spirit” our earnest prayer, and let's all sing praises to God together: (v.1) 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. (v. 2) Thou canst fill me, gracious Spirit, Though I cannot tell Thee how; But I need Thee, greatly need Thee, Come, O come and fill me now. (v. 3) I am weakness, full of weakness, At Thy sacred feet I bow; Blest, divine, eternal Spirit, Fill with pow'r, and fill me now. (v. 4) Cleanse and comfort, bless and save me, Bathe, O bathe my heart and brow; Thou art comforting and saving, Thou art sweetly filling now. (Chorus) 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. Amen.

Eight blessings (3): The blessing of the meek

[Matthew 5:5]

There is a Korean proverb that says, 'When your cousin buys land, your stomach hurts'. Do you think this proverb makes sense? Does it really make your stomach hurt when your cousin actually buys land? I think it's a proverb that I don't quite understand. If our cousin buys land, we should be happy. So why should we have a stomach ache? If our cousin buys the land, shouldn't we be truly happy? I saw an internet blog and there is an article I would like to share with you about this proverb: 'Happiness is simply the act of feeling satisfied with where you are, nothing more, nothing less. So there is no need for you to show jealousy. The same is true when a cousin buys land. You can think of it as buying the land because your cousin needs it. How happy is it to think that your cousin will even grow a farm on the land and share it with his neighbors? If you have a warm heart to cultivate the land together, your heart will be richer and happier' (Internet).

Look at Matthew 5:5 – “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” The third blessing that Jesus teaches us today is “the earth”. Do you know what is the most popular sport in America? It's not soccer or basketball or baseball. It's football. As for how popular American football is, Super Bowl Sunday, the American football final, has the highest food consumption just after Thanksgiving, one of America's biggest holidays. This means that many people gather together to eat and watch the game together on TV. The 2011 American football final broke the highest ratings in American TV history, with over 100 million people watching the game (Internet). I also watch the football final every year. Although I don't even like sports very much, if I try to explain football to people who ask me, I briefly explained this to them since the rules may seem too troublesome: 'American football is simple. That sport is about winning the land.' In fact, some netizens have said that football is basically a game of winning the land and the reason why the sport is so popular with Americans is because America is historically a pioneer country. That's why he said that American football is popular as sports are related to this pioneering ideology (Internet). I think it's an interesting observation. We all know that the United States has historically been a pioneer. After the Puritans who came to the new continent in search of freedom of religion from Europe arrived in the East, they later drove out the native Indians and pioneered the unexplored West. This America is truly a country blessed by God. In fact, a Christian Post survey of 1,400 adults nationwide in October 2008 found that 80% of those who regularly attend worship and 61% of Americans said 'America is a blessed country' (Internet). I also think that the United States in which we live is a country blessed by God. And personally, when I think of this land of

America, I think of it in connection with the land of Canaan, the promised land of God in the story of Moses in the Old Testament, and there have been many times when I have preached that. The reason is because according to the Bible, the land of Canaan is a beautiful and vast land (Exod.3:8; Num. 14:7), a land flowing with milk and honey (13:5; Num. 13:27; 14:8), and a fertile land (Exod.3:8; Num. 14:7). 3:8). From Deuteronomy 8:7, the Bible says, “For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land--a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills.” The Bible says that it is ‘a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing’ (v. 9). Isn't this American land lack nothing? Just like the land of Canaan, where there is no shortage, this land of America we live in is a country with abundant produce. According to Deuteronomy 8, when the Israelites enter the land of Canaan, they will eat and be satisfied (vv. 10, 12), will build fine houses and settle down (v. 12) and their herds and flocks will grow large and their silver and gold will increase and all they have will be multiplied (v. 13). When God promised and blessed Canaan, a land of such blessing, in Genesis 12:1, God said to Abraham that the land was “the land I will show you.” So, the Bible refers to the land as the land sworn to the ancestors of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) (Num. 14:23; Deut. 31:4) and given to Israel (Num. 20:24, 1 Sam. 13:19, 1 Chron. 21:4). In addition, the Bible speaks of the land of Canaan as the land the Lord God will give them (Deut.3:20) and the Lord’s land (Hos. 9:3). And in Deuteronomy 2:12, the land of Canaan is said to be the land of their possession which the Lord gave to them.

The land of this inheritance, Canaan, symbolically means heaven. In other words, the very beautiful land of Canaan flowing with milk and honey that God promised to give to Abraham, the father of faith, and his descendants in the Old Testament refers to heaven, in the New Testament, the true land of Canaan that God promised to give to Jesus and His church. God promised to give this land to Abraham, the father of faith, as a blessing. In Hebrews 11:8-9, it is said that the land Abraham would later receive as his inheritance (v.8) or the promised land (v. 9). Isaac son of Abraham, and Jacob son of Isaac, who had inherited this Promised Land with Abraham lived in tents (v. 9) and Hebrews 11:10 explains why: “For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” What does it mean? Although Abraham lived in tents with his son Isaac and grandson Jacob, by faith he looked forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. The Bible speaks of this city as the city that God has prepared for God's people, that is, a better country – a heavenly one (v. 16). In a word, by faith, Abraham looked to the heavenly city he would enter, that is, the kingdom of heaven. In today's text, Matthew 5:5, Jesus is saying that the meek will inherit this blessing of heaven. So who is “the meek” Jesus is talking about here? When we say “the meek”, I think of Moses in the Old Testament, Numbers 12:3 – “(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth)” (KJV). The Bible clearly states that Moses was very meek, above all the men on the face of the earth. Then, as Jesus said in Matthew 5:5, he should have inherited the land of Canaan. But Moses could not enter the land of Canaan, but died in the land of Moab and was buried there according to God's word (Deut. 34:5-6). Why couldn't Moses enter the promised land of Canaan and die in the land of Moab? We can find the answer in Numbers 20:12 – “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” The reason Moses could not

enter the land of Canaan was because he did not believe in God and did not show the holiness of God in the eyes of the children of Israel. God told Moses to take the staff, and gather the assembly together and speak to that rock before their eyes and I would pour out it water (v. 8). So Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock (v. 10). But he struck the rock twice with his staff (v. 11) after he said to them, “Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” (v. 10) As a result, Moses was not allowed to enter the land of Canaan. It is little bit hard to understand. I wonder how Moses could not enter Canaan, the promised land, because he disobeyed God's word only once. There is an article that explains the reason in an interesting way. To summarize the content of the article briefly, the reason why Moses could not enter the land of Canaan is that when we hear “Moses,” we cannot but think of the “law”. Since God did not allow Moses, who represents the law, to enter the land of Canaan when he did not show God's holiness through his disobedience, the symbolic lesson to Jews and us is to teach the truth that the true land of Canaan cannot enter the kingdom of heaven by obeying the law: ‘ In the case of Moses, he recalls the Ten Commandments, which is the symbol of the law. This is because even though Moses, or the law, shows the way to the land of Canaan, or heaven, it shows symbolically that we cannot by any means enter heaven through the law. Because it is a scene that shows that without the law, we cannot realize our sins and cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without resolving our sins. This is because, although Moses shows the way to the promised land of Canaan, that is, the kingdom of heaven, it contains God's intention to symbolically mean that we can never enter the kingdom of heaven through this law of Moses’ (Internet). I think it's an interesting point of view. The fact that Moses, who represents the Law, did not enter the promised land of Canaan symbolically means that we could not enter the real promised land of heaven through the Law. What do you think of this interpretation? Most of the positive expressions in the Bible refer to the land of Canaan, such as an exceedingly good land and a land that lacks nothing (Num. 14:7; Deut. 8:8-9). But the Bible also describes the land of Canaan as 'a land stained with sin (Lev. 18:15; Num. 35:34; Ps. 106:34, Mic. 2:10). This means that the land of Canaan, which God promised to Abraham and his descendants, was not the perfect promised land. The perfect Promised Land is the heaven to which only the land of Canaan is pointing. Jesus is saying that this kingdom of heaven is a blessing that the meek will inherit.

So who is the “meek” Jesus spoke of? To answer this question, we must return to the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew, the author of the Gospel of Matthew, uses this Greek word for “meek” only twice in Matthew's Gospel, outside of today's text (11:29, 21:5). One of those two times was used in the very famous saying, “Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (11:28), after which Jesus spoke of who he was. Look at Matthew 11:29 – “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (KJV). Here, when Jesus said of himself, ‘I am meek’, he is saying that Jesus’ heart was humbled and that the humbled heart of Jesus was fixed only on God. And the humble heart of Jesus, fixed only on God, when he came to this earth, implies that he came in a humble, insignificant and weak form (Kittel). It is in Matthew 21:5 where the author Matthew uses the word “meek” again in the Gospel of Matthew: “Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass” (KJV). This verse is a quotation from Zechariah 9:9, and “thy King” here refers to the Messiah who will be the true King of Israel, that is, Christ Jesus. This saying that Jesus Christ rode on the colt, as we have heard well on Palm Sunday, is the one who

entered Jerusalem to be crucified and die on Good Friday to forgive us our sins and to save us. After all, if you look at the biblical story about Jesus' coming to this earth and his final death on the cross, Jesus' beginning on this earth was humble and his end on this earth was also humble. Then what is the humble heart of Jesus? Look at Philippians 2:5-8: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!" The humble heart of Jesus empties himself and humbles himself. And the humble heart of Jesus is to submit to the will of God the Father even to the point of death on the cross.

The meek are those who empty themselves, humble themselves and submit to the will of the Lord by imitating the humble heart of Jesus. And the blessing that this meek person receives is that he will inherit the real Promised Land, Heaven. Jesus said that he will inherit this kingdom of heaven. What does the phrase "inherit" mean here? It means what a child will receive from his father (Park). Look at Romans 8:17 – "Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." We who believe in Jesus are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Therefore, by God's exclusive grace, we believe in Jesus Christ and become heirs together with Christ, and will inherit the kingdom of heaven in the future.

This is what Psalms 37:11 says: "But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace." In fact, the Bible refers to the heavenly land as "the Beautiful Land" (Dan.8:9). Although there is no real peace in this world, only wars and battles, the coming world, the kingdom of heaven, is full of God's peace. The Bible also refers to the kingdom of heaven as "good land" (1 Kgs. 14:15) and "the holy land" (Zech. 2:12). Although the land we are living in now is a bad land, a dirty and ugly land, and the land of Satan, the kingdom of heaven we will enter in the future is the good land and the holy land. Not only the psalmist (Ps.37:11) but also Jesus (Mt. 5:5) is saying that the meek will inherit this Promised Land, the kingdom of heaven. I hope and pray that we will all be blessed with this wonderful heavenly blessing.

Eight blessings (4): The blessing of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

[Matthew 5:6]

Are you living with a sense of satisfaction right now? Are you happy now? There is a quiz developed by Dr. Ed Dinner in the United States to measure happiness (Internet). There are 5 questions in the quiz, and you have to score them when you answer them. Answer 1 is “definitely not”, answer 2 is “no”, answer 3 is “somewhat not”, and answer 4 is “Neither this nor that”, answer 5 is “slightly yes”, answer 6 is “yes” and answer 7 is “strongly yes.” After answering each of the five questions from 1 to 7 in this way, if the total score is 31-35, “extremely satisfied”, 26-30 is “very satisfied”, 21-25 is “slightly satisfied”, 20 is considered “moderate”, 15-19 is “slightly dissatisfied”, 10-14 is “very dissatisfied”, and 5-9 is “extremely dissatisfied”. Then I am asking you those five questions:

- (1) Overall, my life is close to my ideal. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- (2) My life’s conditions are very good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- (3) I already got the important things I want in life 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- (4) Even if I am born again, there is little I want to change 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- (5) I have no intention of changing the frame of my life in the future 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When I asked myself these five questions for measuring happiness, I scored them on a scale of 1 to 7, and when I added all the scores on the five items, I got 30. It was “very satisfied” (26-30). But it was not “extremely satisfied” (31-35). Of course, I don't think this five-question quiz is truly a measure of my own happiness. But I think it can be measured to some extent. The reason is because the answers to those five questions are focused on Jesus for me. For example, when the first question, “Overall, my life is close to my ideal,” the “ideal” for me is Jesus. And the second question, “My life’s conditions are very good” and the third question, “I already got the important things I want in life,” I have to confess that my life’s conditions are very good because I have already received all the spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ. The point I want to tell you here is that those who are satisfied with Jesus alone are the happiest people in this world. I am reminded of the gospel song “Only with Jesus”: “I'll praise the Lord, Jesus You are my everything And I feel satisfaction only with Jesus I'll praise the Lord, and I'll lift my voice aloud

'Cause Jesus gave me eternal life . I'll praise you, I'll praise your greatest love You are my strength and power, Jesus. My life has changed because of you I'll praise your greatest love”(Internet).

In today's text, Matthew 5:6, Jesus says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” The fourth happiness that Jesus teaches us is that “they shall be satisfied”. Here, ‘to be satisfied’ means ‘to be content’ in other words. The fourth happiness that Jesus teaches us today is contentment or satisfaction. A study on mental health conducted by Harvard Mental Health found that people are more satisfied with their lives as they get older. So the older you get, the happier you tend to be. In a 2008 telephone answering survey of 340,000 adults between the ages of 18 and 85, researchers asked respondents to rate their life satisfaction with respect to age, interpersonal relationships, health, and income on a scale of 1 to 10. Respondents were also asked about their emotional experiences, such as happiness, sadness, anger, stress, and worry, the day before the interview. In the study, researchers found that middle-aged people (especially people between the ages of 50 and 53) face a psychological turning point in their lives. In other words, the older people get, the less anger or stress they feel. It has also been shown that by the age of 50, people are less concerned about things and experience increased happiness and joy. Overall life satisfaction declines between the ages of 18 and 50, but starts to increase thereafter. In fact, people between the ages of 82 and 85 were found to be more satisfied with life than those between the ages of 18 and 21. Researchers have not been able to pinpoint why the age of 50 to 53 is a turning point in life satisfaction. But people tend to remember more positive things than negative ones as they get older, such as higher emotional intelligence and a more blunt acceptance of big things. It is speculated that this is because they tend to remember more positive things than negative ones (Internet). What do you think of the results of this survey? Do you also think that the older you get, the more satisfied you are with life and the happier you are?

I personally agree with some of the findings of this study, but also with others I don't. The part that I don't agree with is because I think that life satisfaction may not increase as you get older. And the reason that satisfaction may not increase is because there is greed (possessiveness, etc.). A good example of this is the Israelites who escaped from Egypt and lived in the wilderness for 40 years in order to enter the land of Canaan in the time of Moses in the Old Testament. This is because they often blamed God and Moses. Why did they blame God and Moses so much? Didn't they do it because they were dissatisfied in their hearts? Why were the Israelites dissatisfied? The Bible says in Numbers 11:4 – “The rabble who were among them had greedy desires; and also the sons of Israel wept again and said, "Who will give us meat to eat?"” The reason the Israelites grumbled in the wilderness was dissatisfaction, and the cause of their dissatisfaction was greedy desires. Because they were greedy in the wilderness (Ps.106:14), they often complained to God and Moses. That's it. If we have greed in our hearts, we will never be satisfied. Rather, if we have greed in our hearts, we will live in dissatisfaction, complaining and resentment. As a result, we can never live with feeling happy. Although the older I get, the more I should throw away this greed and have to live my life with contentment and gratitude, in my personal opinion, even among the grown-ups who have grown old, there seem to be people who still live without giving up on this covetousness and greed in their hearts. How unfortunate is this man? A life unsatisfied is indeed a pitiful life.

In today's text, Matthew 5:6, Jesus said that the fourth happiness that Jesus teaches us is, "for they will be satisfied." What is Jesus saying who will be satisfied with what? To answer this question, we must consider today's text Matthew 5:6, the first half: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" Jesus is saying that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied. Here, the important question we need to ask is "What is righteousness?" This word "righteousness" occurs 500 times in the Old Testament and 225 times in the New Testament (Achtmeier). And this word "righteousness" has three broad meanings (Swanson): (1) The first meaning is "righteousness", "what is right", "justice". Look at Matthew 5:10 – "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (2) The second meaning is, "to put in/be right with someone." Look at Romans 1:17 – "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." (3) The third meaning is to perform a law or ritual required by religion. Look at Matthew 6:1 – "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." "Righteousness" that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 5:6 means "justice" in the first sense.

As we already know, the righteousness that the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Jesus' day, sought was "self-righteousness." So they kept all the Law of Moses, so they wanted to be saved through their own righteousness, which is the righteousness of this law. This is the greatest characteristic of legalism, self-righteousness. Here, "self-righteousness" refers to an attitude to stand before God by relying on one's own religious conduct (Internet). In biblical terms, this is "righteousness by the works of the law." What, then, was the religious conduct they relied on? As in Luke 18:9-14 about the prayers of the Pharisees and tax collectors who went up to the temple to pray, the Pharisees relied on their religious practices by fasting twice a week and giving tithes of their income (v. 12). In addition, according to the words of Matthew 6, the Pharisees practiced their own righteousness before them in order to be seen by them (v. 1), and one of their righteousness was giving alms. In other words, the Pharisees gave alms like a trumpet in the synagogues and streets in order to be glorified by people (v. 2). Never they secretly gave alms to the needy. Not only that, but when they prayed to God, the Pharisees loved to stand in the synagogues and at the entrance to the streets to pray like hypocrites (v. 5). Even when they fasted, they fasted to show people how sad they were like the hypocrites (v. 16). In this way, the Pharisees in Jesus' day thoroughly kept the law and were confident of their own righteousness (Lk. 18:9). And they believed that they could be saved by being justified by God by their own righteousness. This is really stupid. The reason is because we can never be justified by God and be saved by human effort or works. The Bible Romans 3:20 clearly states this: "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." Look at Galatians 2:16 – "know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." What does it mean? A person is never justified by works of the law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ. After all, in today's text, Matthew 5:6, the "righteousness" Jesus is talking about is not the "self-righteousness" that the Pharisees believed and sought. "Self-righteousness" obtained by keeping the law (doing good) is by no means the "righteousness" Jesus is talking about. Then, whose

righteousness is the “righteousness” Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5:6? It is not our man's righteousness, but "God's righteousness." Look at Romans 3:21-22: “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.” So, what is “the righteousness of God” here? Here, the righteousness of God is the righteousness of God that is revealed in addition to the law, which the Old Testament testifies, and is the righteousness of God based on the redemption of Jesus Christ (Chang-seh Kim). Here, “redemption” means that when Jesus bought a slave, he paid the ransom for the slave. The word “redemption” means 'paid' or 'paid the price'. Therefore, he paid the price with his life for us sinners, forgiving and saving all our sins. Therefore, God justified us who believe in Jesus freely on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ (v. 24). God forgave us all our sins on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ (v. 25) and set us free from our sins (Acts 13:38). Therefore, we have nothing to boast about like the Pharisees (v. 27). The reason is because we have never been justified before God on any grounds we have done. Rather, the reason we have no choice but to boast about the Lord is that the Lord has justified us by imputing us with the righteousness of God.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for this righteousness of God, and the blessing they will enjoy is that they will be satisfied (Mt. 5:6). I am reminded of the hymn “Come, Ye Disconsolate”: (v. 1) “Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish; Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel, Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell you're anguish. Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal,” (v. 4) “All who draw nigh and take, here, of Cod's bounty Shall know a spring of Life, still to increase, Water of life shall flow up from within them, Ending all thirsting, and never to cease.” When I think of this hymn, Isaiah 55:1-2 comes to mind: “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.” Will you not respond to this Lord's invitation? The Lord is inviting all you who thirst to come. Even those without money are invited to come. You are invited to come without money and without cost. We must no longer labor for things that are not food. We must no longer labor for the things that do not satisfy us. Jesus said, “Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life” (Jn. 6:27). To work for the food that endures to eternal life means to believe in Jesus, the Bread of Life. Jesus is saying this: “... I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst” (v. 35). His only begotten Son, Jesus, died on the cross to pay for all our sins. In Jesus, the Son of God, we have already received the forgiveness of sins (redemption) (Col. 1:14). So Jesus is telling you today: “... Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). As we respond to the Lord's invitation with faith, I hope and pray that we will all be satisfied with the Lord Jesus alone, receiving forgiveness of sins through the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 10:43).

Eight blessings (5): The blessing of the merciful

[Matthew 5:7]

We have already meditated on “The blessing of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” the fourth of the eight blessings Jesus taught. That blessing is ‘satisfaction’. There is one point that we did not go into more detail as we meditate on the fourth blessing. There are three meanings of the word “righteous” (Swanson): (1) The first meaning is righteousness, what is right, justice. One example is Matthew 5:6, which we have already meditated on, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.” Another example is Matthew 5:10 – “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Here, “righteousness” is “God’s righteousness,” not “self-righteousness” or “righteousness of the law” that the Pharisees sought. And the righteousness of God is the righteousness based on the redemption of Jesus Christ, begotten Son of God, who took on all our sins and died on the cross in our place to pay for our sins. (2) The second meaning is, “be put right with, be in a right relationship with”. Look at Romans 1:17 – “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” As sinners who were enemies with God because of Adam’s original sin, our right relationship with God has now been restored because all our sins are forgiven through the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and God’s righteousness is imputed to us and we are justified. Now, we, who have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ, are no longer enmity with God, but became children of God who call God “Abba Father.” The restoration of this right relationship is because the righteousness of God has been imputed to us only through faith in Jesus Christ. (3) The third meaning is religious observances such as practices required by a religion. Look at Matthew 6:1 – “Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.” The “your righteousness” Jesus spoke of here is giving alms: “So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you” (vv. 2-4). The reason Jesus said these words was that the Pharisees wanted to be justified by keeping the law, and one of the laws they tried to keep was almsgiving. The problem, however, was that they were hypocrites in almsgiving. In other words, they made visible alms in order to be honored by men. Therefore, Jesus instructed his disciples not to give alms to the poor like the Pharisees, but to

give in secret. The reason is because “your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you” (v. 4). The teaching of Jesus here is the lesson that God's children, who are justified by believing in Jesus Christ by God's exclusive grace, should live by doing righteousness through that grace, and such a life is a lesson in secretly giving alms to those in need. It is by the grace of God that the righteous live a life of giving, and they do not give in order to gain righteousness through merit like the Pharisees.

The word “righteousness” in Matthew 5:6, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied” has two meanings other than its intended meaning in the text. To recapitulate those two meanings, one is that we are right with God, and the other is that we do what God requires of us. So, what does God really require of us? That God's request comes from today's text, Matthew 5:7 – “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Today, I would like to receive a lesson from God by meditating on the fifth of the eight blessings that Jesus teaches us, “they shall receive mercy”.

Personally, when I think of the word “mercy” in today's text, I think of the book “Mercy” by Henri Nouwen. Henri Nouwen says that “compassion” is derived from the Latin words 'pati' and 'cum', and combining these two words means 'to suffer together'. In other words, compassion urges us to go to the place of wounds, to enter the place of pain, to share broken pains and fears, confusion and anguish. Henri Nouwen also says that the Hebrew word for “mercy” is ‘rachamim’, which refers to the womb of God (Nouwen). So, I searched the internet a bit about the womb and found out about the 'wisdom of the womb'. I have summarized it in three (Internet): (1) The characteristic (wisdom) of the womb is ‘All body tissues have the function of rejecting foreign substances, and the womb not only accepts a fertilized egg that is a foreign substance (an egg that is fertilized by the meeting of sperm and egg in the fallopian tube) without any rejection reaction. It is said that the placental blood vessels created afterward also accept the penetrating into the endometrium. (2) The reason for accepting the penetration of the placental blood vessels is to establish communication with the intrauterine blood vessels to supply nutrients and to grow the placenta. It should be noted here that this does not mean that the penetration of the placental vessels is not tolerated indefinitely. After the placental blood vessels have penetrated to a certain extent, it inhibits further penetration and prevents the placental blood vessels from communicating with blood vessels circulating throughout the mother's body. (3) Another characteristic of the womb is that all cells constantly repeat the creation and destruction of cells, and the endometrium secretes hormones to prevent the natural death of cells for ten months. In addition, the womb is strong and thick in the early stages of pregnancy, but becomes thin and soft in the late stages of pregnancy, making it easier for the fetus to move on the mother's belly wall. I have learned three lessons from comparing these three womb characteristics with God's mercy: (1) Just as the womb does not reject foreign matter but accepts it, so God the Father does not reject us sinners, but accepts us. (2) Just as the womb receives the penetration of the placental blood vessels and nourishes the placenta to grow, so the Son Jesus accepts even the penetration of such sinners like us, that is, He died on the cross for our sins, giving us the Bread of Life. Therefore, those who believe in Jesus, the Bread of Life, block the communication of sin so that the Lord will no longer be penetrated by sin and defile the whole body and soul. (3) Just as the endometrium blocks the natural death of cells

while the baby is growing in the womb, and the womb becomes thin and soft to facilitate the movement of the fetus in the mother's belly wall in the latter part of pregnancy, God the Holy Spirit makes us lively and move freely in the Lord, leading a life of faith.

Who are “the merciful” Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5:7? The merciful here refer to the people who show compassion for the lowly (status, importance, insignificant) people (Swanson). To put this in Henri Nouwen's Latin definition, the one who suffers with those of low (status, importance, insignificant) is the merciful. These people are referred to in the Bible as “the merciful”, and the mercy of these people shows the mercy of God. Look at Luke 6:35-36: “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Jesus is saying, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” The mercy of our Heavenly Father revealed here is to love the enemies, and to be kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Jesus, who tells us to be merciful just as God is merciful, loved us who were enemies of God and showed mercy to us because He was kind to us who were evil who did not know God's grace. Look at Hebrews 2:17 – “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Jesus' mercy toward us is the atonement for our sins. In other words, Jesus paid the price for all our sins. How did he do that? Jesus took on our sins and died on the cross to atone for all our sins. In this way, the disciples of Jesus who experienced the Lord's mercy by receiving the forgiveness of sins through the atoning death and redemption of Jesus Christ, should show mercy to our neighbors just as Jesus showed us mercy. What does it mean to show mercy to our neighbor here? Specifically, we can think of two things:

(1) When we say that we show mercy to our neighbors, it means that we help the poor and needy.

Look at Matthew 6:2-4: “So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” In fact, the Greek word for “the merciful” in Matthew 5:7 is used only in the New Testament to mean acts of kindness or giving to the poor (Kittel). And the interesting thing is that the merciful do not only do charitable works to help the poor, but also pray to God. In other words, the merciful people give alms in love of neighbor, but also faithfully practices prayer in relationship with God. So, after Jesus talked about giving alms to the poor in Matthew 6:2-4, he talked about prayer in verses 5-15. A good example of this is Cornelius, a devout and God-fearing man of Acts 10. Look at Acts 10:2 – “a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually.” And God said to Cornelius through an angel, “... 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God” (v. 31). In other words, godliness that God

remembers is prayer and almsgiving. The Apostle James says this in James 1:27 – “Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” The Apostle James said that pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is caring for widows and orphans, who are in the lowest places in the world, and keeping oneself unstained from the world. Cornelius devoted himself to alms and prayers with pure and undefiled godliness before God. In order to keep himself unstained from the world, he prayed to God and feared God, and in love for his neighbor, he gave many alms to the people (Acts 10:2). Therefore, he was praised by all the Jewish people (v. 22). Like Cornelius, we too should be the devout and God-fearing people who are being praised by people. We are to live a life that shows the power of godliness, not just the form of godliness (2 Tim.3:5).

(2) When we say that we show mercy to our neighbor, we mean that we have compassion on our neighbor and forgive.

Look at Matthew 18:35 – “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.” The context of this verse is that Jesus gave the parable of the unforgiving servant. And the reason for this parable was that the Apostle Peter came to Jesus and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” (v. 21) To his question, Jesus said, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven” (v. 22). After he said this, Jesus spoke the parable of a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves (v. 23). In the parable of the settlement of accounts, there is a man who owed the king ten thousand talents (v. 24) and one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii (v. 28). Although the king had compassion on the man who owed him ten thousand talent, and forgave him the debt (v. 27), the man who was forgiven the debt did not have compassion on his fellow slave, but threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed (v. 30). When the king heard the news, he called the slave whom the king forgave the debt, and said: “... You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’” (vv. 32-33) The essence of this parable is to forgive a brother from the heart. If we do not forgive our brother from the heart, our Heavenly Father will not forgive us either. Jesus clearly states this in Matthew 6:14-15: “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. “But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” We must forgive those who have wronged us. Then our Heavenly Father will also forgive our sins. To do that, we must look to Jesus, who had compassion on such sinners like us and died on the cross to to forgive us all our sins. And we must realize the mercy of the Lord toward us. Then we will be able to have compassion on those who have sinned against us and forgive us through the mercy of the Lord who had mercy on us and forgave us (Eph. 4:32).

This is the blessing the Lord gives to those who are merciful. That is to receive mercy. Look at Matthew 5:7 – “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” Here, the fifth blessing Jesus speaks of, receiving mercy, means that the Lord has compassion on us and forgives us, and that the Lord gives us salvation. Because we are merciful to our neighbors, when we forgive their sins, the Lord allows us to enjoy the blessing of forgiving us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Those who do not obey this word, that is, those who do not forgive those who sin against us, will not be forgiven by our Heavenly Father, so they have no choice but to live an unhappy life. Therefore, as the Lord has forgiven us, we must also forgive those who trespass against us. Also, since we have compassion on our neighbors, we should give alms and help them. In other words, we must focus on philanthropy. We must live a life of giving alms to our neighbors who are in need. When we do this, we will be able to experience and enjoy the hand of grace that God gives us when we are in trouble.

It is said that Julian, who lived in England 600 years ago, prayed to God for three kinds of wounds (Tozer): (1) It is a wound of repentance. Julian prayed, ‘Oh God! May I be wounded by the pain of repentance. Make me grieve for what I have sinned, and live in it.’ (2) It is a wound of longing for God. Julian prayed, ‘God! Give me God. One God is enough for me. If I pursue something less than God, I will always be thirsty. Because to me God is everything.’ She also prayed, ‘Oh, God! Wound me with an incurable perfume bottle. Since this world is not my home, how can I settle here? How can I not long for my heavenly hometown?’ (3) It is a wound of mercy. Julian said she wanted to have compassion on the world like Jesus did. Pastor A. W. Tozer is saying that Christianity's greatest enemy today is not materialism or liberalism, but the Christians who do not imitate Christ. They believe in orthodox doctrine, but do not know what mercy is. Pastor Tozer said this about the wounds of mercy: ‘I never want to heal this wound. Rather, I want to feel pain with those in pain and share in their wounds’ (Tozer). Shouldn't we also offer these prayers to God today? I pray that God inflicts the wounds of repentance on all of us, for the sins that we do not love our neighbor as Jesus commanded, that we do not have compassion on our neighbor and that we do not forgive our neighbor. Also, I pray that God will give all of us the wounds of longing for God so that we will long for heaven more and more and live partly heavenly life on this earth. And above all, I earnestly pray in the name of Jesus that God will inflict the wounds of mercy on us so that we may feel compassion for those who are in pain, feel the pain together, and live the lives of compassionate people who share in their wounds.

Eight blessings (6): The blessing of the pure in heart

[Matthew 5:8]

Do you have a “ba.bo”(바.보.) among the people you love? How would you feel if someone who loved you came to you and said, 'You're ba.bo.'? Do you feel bad for yourself and your pride hurt? Here, “ba.bo” does not refer to the ‘stupid and foolish person’ we usually think of. But it means ‘the more we look, the more we want to see’. A long time ago, when I heard the meaning of this slang term ‘ba.bo.’, I thought, ‘I want to be a ba.bo.’ How good is it that the more you look, the more you want to be seen? It is a blessing to be able to see and live with the people we want to see while we live on this earth. How many people live in this world without seeing the ones they love? How much would you miss, especially if your loved one has already passed away and fell asleep? Especially when we are having a difficult time, it seems that we think more of the deceased we love more and more. Are you sure that you will go to heaven and meet your loved one again?

We have already begun to learn what the Lord requires of us as disciples of Jesus Christ by meditating on Matthew 5:7. The first requirement is ‘have mercy’ (Mt. 5:7). We learned that the word to be merciful is to suffer with the afflicted, but specifically to help the poor, and also to have compassion on and forgive those who have wronged us. Then we learned that the fifth blessing the Lord gives us is that we will receive mercy. When we meditate on the word we have learned in connection with today's text, Matthew 5:8, the heart that the Lord requires of us is a heart of compassion. And the heart of compassion is a heart to give to those who are suffering because of poverty, and also a heart of forgiveness that forgives those who have sinned.

Today, we are going to learn the second request of what the Lord requires of us, focusing on today's text, Matthew 5:8. Look at Matthew 5:8 – ““Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” The second requirement is to ‘purify your heart.’ Personally, when I think of this second request of the Lord, it reminds me of the title of the first book I wrote in 2007, ‘Those who are pure in heart.’ The biggest reason I decided to title the book at that time was because of God's grace that I received while meditating on Psalms 73. That grace is the lesson that we should carefully guard our heart, the source of life, from all the sinful things that deceive, defile, and pollute our hearts in this sinful world. Especially in Psalms 73, the psalmist Asaph confessed that God does good to the pure in heart among Israel (v. 1). I was taught to be on the lookout for these three factors that cause me to stumble

from keeping my purity of heart. These three factors are (1) that we can stumble like Asaph in jealousy because we see the wicked prosper (v. 3), and (2) that we can suffer and stumble like Asaph because of the pride of the wicked. (v. 6), and (3) that we, like Asaph, can stumble because of those who followed the wicked (vv. 10-11). When the psalmist Asaph saw the prosperity of the wicked, the pride of the wicked, and how he reacted to those who pursued the wicked, he said, “Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure And washed my hands in innocence” (v. 13). In other words, when he saw the wicked, he thought that surely in vain he had kept his heart pure. And he lamented his miserable life (v. 14). He was envious and his feet came close to stumbling because he saw the prosperity of the wicked while he who lived righteously to keep his own pure heart was suffering. Have any of you, like the psalmist Asaph, almost stumbled? What we Christians also implicitly think about is that there is no one in this world who does not dust off their clothes and thus are living in compromise with the world in the thought of what it is necessary to live so cleanly and honestly. And while we live in compromise with the world like that, we don't have any sense of shame in our hearts, but there's a bigger part of our heart than that is that everyone seems to think that it's okay to do that. Therefore, when we see our Christian brothers and sisters striving to live honest and clean lives among us, we may express praise and respect with our lips, but in our hearts we may see them as ignorant and foolish people who do not know how to live in this world. Among the contents of the letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in the church in Corinth, 2 Corinthians 11:3 comes to mind: “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” Now, Satan is deceiving us, Christians, with his tricks, and the purpose to lead us astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. In fact, how far away are our hearts from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ now? How many people around you think, ‘Oh, that person is a true Christian, and that person loves the Lord with a very pure heart’? I think that is the evidence that we are now deceived and have lost the sincerity and purity of their hearts. Now, our hearts are mixed with truth and lies, and are polluted with the world's sinful things. Therefore, we must listen with longing to the message that Jesus gives us in Matthew 5:8, ‘Purify your heart.’

So, who are “the pure in heart” Jesus spoke of in Matthew 5:8? Who are the pure in heart? Here, the original Greek word meaning for “the pure in heart” means a person who is morally and spiritually free from transgression, so a person who is good in God's sight and without sin (Friberg). In other words, “the pure in heart” Jesus spoke of refers to those who have been cleansed or purified spiritually from the responsibility of sin and the pollution of sin (Zodhiates). To understand what it means to be spiritually cleansed or purified here, we need to consider the words of Jesus washing the disciples' feet in John 13. This is because the Greek word for “the pure in heart” that Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5:8 also appears in John 13:10. Look at John 13:10 – “Jesus said to him, ‘He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’” Here, Jesus said to his disciples, “He who has bathed” and it refers to washing their entire body. What that means for us is that all our sins are washed away by the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. So Jesus said, “He who has bathed ... is completely clean ...” (v. 10). Because Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, shed his precious blood on the cross, God has already washed away all our sins and made us clean. That is why we are able to praise God by believing in the hymn “Have You Been to Jesus”: (v. 1) Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing pow'r, Are you

washed in the blood of the Lamb, Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour, Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb, (Refrain) Are you washed in the blood, In the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb, Are your garments spot-less Are they white as snow, Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb, (v. 4) Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin. Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb, There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean, Oh, be washed in the blood of the Lamb. We have already been washed clean from all our sins by the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. We who believe in Jesus are free from sin in the sight of God and are without sin. We are pure in the sight of God. But why is it that in today's text, Matthew 5:8, Jesus is telling us also to purify our hearts? The reason is because even though we have already been forgiven of our sins and justified by God through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we will continue to commit sins in this world until we die and enter the glorious kingdom of heaven. That means that, through the death of Jesus on the cross, our original sins, past sins, present sins, and all sins that we will commit until death are forgiven, and through His resurrection, we are justified, we must lead a life of faith that pursues purity of heart as Jesus said because we are still qualitatively living in this body that is capable of doing unrighteousness and committing sins. As if in God's court, we were forgiven of our sins through the death of Jesus on the cross, and we were justified by wearing the righteous cloth of Jesus through the resurrection of Jesus. But we still have the old man's nature to do what we don't want to do, and not doing the things that we want to do. To make this easier to understand, I thought about the word "imputation". When we think about "imputation", we believe that God's righteousness is imputed to us through Jesus' death and resurrection. But we do not seem to think well that our sins are imputed to Jesus. When we think of the fact that our sins were imputed to Jesus, the perfect God and man, who was righteous, without any sin, and died on the cross to pay for all our sins, does that mean that Jesus has sins because our sins were imputed to Jesus? Absolutely not, isn't it? In the same way, because God's righteousness is imputed to us, we are justified, but are we perfectly righteous? It isn't, right? Aren't we still sinning? So Jesus is telling us to live a life of righteousness. And the second righteousness we must practice is to live a life that pursues purity of heart.

Then, what is life in pursuit of purity of heart? How can we pursue purity of heart? I think of 3 things: (1) As we have already meditated on in Matthew 5:4, we must become mourners. In other words, if we seek purity of heart, we should grieve and suffer for our sins against God. And we must be contrite for our own sins with a broken heart. In a word, we must repent. We must confess and repent of our sins daily and moment by moment. This is the basic and fundamental to a life that pursues purity of heart. (2) In order for us to pursue purity of heart, we must have the Word of God in our hearts. Look at Psalms 119:11 – "Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You." Like the psalmist, we must treasure the word of the Lord in our hearts so that we may not sin against Him. How, then, can we treasure the word of the Lord in our hearts here? Look at Psalms 119:9 – "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word." In order to have the word of the Lord in our hearts, we must live by the word of the Lord. In other words, when we live by keeping the word of the Lord, the word of the Lord becomes ours (v. 56). The Apostle Peter says that we purify our souls by obeying the truth (1 Pet. 1:22). In doing so, we should seek purity of heart. (3) In order for us to pursue purity of heart, we must be poor in spirit (Mt. 5:3). Although we feel spiritual need, we must humbly acknowledge the fact that we cannot pursue

purity of heart on our own and ask God for help, knowing that no one can help but God. So the psalmist David prayed to God. Among the prayers, Psalms 51:10 reveals the content of this prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me." It reminds me of the gospel song "Create in Me a Clean Heart": "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a right spirit within me, Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a right spirit within me, Cast me not away from Thy presence, O Lord, And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me, Restore unto me, the joy of Thy salvation, And renew a right spirit within me." What kind of blessing does God give to those who pursue such purity of heart? That blessing is that we will see God in the future. Look at Matthew 5:8 again: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The Bible 1 John 3:6 says, "... no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him." Also, the Bible 3 John 1:11 says, "... he one who does evil has not seen God." What do you mean? How can one who commits evil and commits a sin see a holy God? However, those who were sinners like us and who were enemies of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross received the forgiveness of all sins and were justified, so that we could see God in the future. The Bible says that we will see Him face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). Can you imagine that the day He returns to this world we will see Him face to face? Today, the Lord promises to give this blessing to the pure in heart (Mt. 5:8). Wouldn't you like to receive this blessing and enjoy this blessing?

As I was sleeping in the church shepherd's room at dawn last Thursday, I woke up suddenly around 4 am. I woke up from a very vivid dream, because I saw the late Pastor Andrew Kim in my dream. What I still remember is that when Pastor Kim was in the hospital, my father came and went, and then my uncle Pastor Andrew quoted a verse from the Bible and said to me. That Bible verse was Genesis 33:10b – "... for I see your face as one sees the face of God," At that time, Pastor Andrew said this word to me after meeting he met his oldest brother. However, last Thursday at dawn, when I saw the face of the late Pastor Andrew Kim in my dream, it seemed to me that I had seen the face of God. His bright, bright and kind smile is still unforgettable. Pastor Andrew Kim approached me with that smile, and hugged me in my dream. Then I cried in my dream, but when I woke up, there were tears in my eyes. This is what the Bible Psalms 17:15 says: "As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake." We will see the face of the Lord in righteousness. Through the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross, all our sins are forgiven and our hearts are pure, we will see the Lord whom we miss. We will go up to heaven and see the face of the Lord in the house the Lord. At that time, we will gather together with the saints who have fallen asleep first and give praise to the Lord in glory, hallelujah, with joy. Until the day we see the face of the Lord in that bright heavenly house, I hope and pray that we will all strive to live with compassion for the souls, which is what the Lord has commanded us to do, and pursue purity of heart.

Eight blessings (7): The blessing of the peacemakers

[Matthew 5:9]

Do you know when “Peacemaker Day” is? I think, like me, you may have heard of the word Peacemaker's Day for the first time. The Korean Peacemaker Ministries has been commemorating November 11th as “Peacemaker Day” since 2003. Here, “Peacemaker Day” is to reflect on the present state of this country, people, churches and individuals suffering from conflict, and to understand how desperately the ministry of peace is needed in this age and the necessity of ministry. It is said that it was established to have a time to pray for the true peace of Christ to come to this earth while reflecting on its purpose. It is said that on this Peacemaker Day, the “Peace Maker Award” is established and awarded, and the award is given in obedience to the command to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit” (Eph. 4:3) even in the difficult domestic reality of conflict and strife. It is said that it was prepared to encourage not only the church, but also to discover and encourage individuals and organizations that are working to create a culture of reconciliation socially and nationally. The purpose of this award is threefold, and the first purpose is as follows: ‘To encourage individuals and organizations that are making a positive impact around them while silently carrying out the ministry of peace, and to shine their light more to the glory of God’ (Internet). I came to mind the first purpose of the Peacemaker Award. In particular, I was challenged by the word of faithfully carrying out the ministry of peace. And I have a desire to have a good influence on the people around me by faithfully carrying out the ministry of peace along with challenges. Perhaps the reason is because I personally believe in maintaining unity at home, in church, and in the Lord. So, the word I personally have in my heart and strive to obey is Ephesians 4:3: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

We are receiving the lessons Jesus gives us about “the Beatitudes”, that is, the ‘Eight blessings’, in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, focusing on the text of Matthew 5:1-12. If we review the words we have meditated on so far, the first to sixth blessings are: (1) the kingdom of heaven (v. 3), (2) shall be comforted (v. 4), (3) shall inherit the earth (v. 5), (4) shall be satisfied (v. 6), (5) shall receive mercy (v. 7), and (6) shall see God (v. 8). And from verse 7, we learned that Jesus requires of us. First, what Jesus requires of us is 'have mercy' (v. 7), and secondly, 'purify our

hearts' (v. 8). Today, focusing on the text of Matthew 5:9, we want to receive the grace that God gives us while meditating on the third request of Jesus and the seventh blessing that He gives us.

Look at Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” The life of discipleship that Jesus requires of us today is “Be the peacemakers.”

Are we really peacemakers? I received three lessons on ‘The right relationship of the Christians’ based on Proverbs 20:19-22. The first lesson is that we should not associate with a gossip (Prov. 20:19). In other words, I was instructed not to associate with those who go about gossiping, revealing other people's secrets (v. 19). The reason is because the gossip who likes to gossip breaks trust by revealing other people's secrets. Another reason is that gossips cause quarrels (26:20) and also separate close friends (16:28). What do you think of this lesson? My personal opinion is that many of us are hurting in one way or another, both inside and outside the church (home, work, etc.) and in our relationships. Why are there quarrels and fighting in the church? Why do those of us who claim to be following Jesus quarrel and strife even when we go outside the church? Why do we quarrel and strife with each other, even at home? The Apostle James says in James 4:1 that it is caused by our desires that battle within us. In other words, it is this fighting desire that causes quarrels and strife within the church, outside the church, and at home. And one of the main causes of our strife and quarrel is that we are not seeking love (see Prov. 17:9). There is quarrel and strife among us because we do not ask God for love, but rather because we pray out of envy (Jam. 4:2), and with wrong motives, so that we may spend it on our pleasures (v. 3). So now we are with those who hate peace, which causes strife and quarrel.

In Psalms 120:6, the Bible says that the psalmist lived among those who hated peace. Among them, the psalmist longed for peace, but those who hated peace loved contention, and were enjoying hurting others with lies. So he said: “I am a man of peace; but when I speak, they are for war” (v. 8). In the end, the psalmist had no choice but to suffer. In the midst of this, he had no choice but to cry out to God (vv. 1-2). Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: ‘The righteous are often criticized for no reason in their lifetime. However, the way to prevent it is not to defend them one by one, but to tell God and receive his help’ (Park). Is there anyone among you who desperately needs God's help? In human relationships, you want peace, but isn't there someone who is suffering because of those who hate peace? Isn't there a person who hates you from the heart and quarrels with you for no reason and even walks around criticizing you and making bad comments about you? Rather than trying to defend each of those people's criticisms and bad reviews, I want you to go to your Heavenly Father in silence and express your heart. He will hear your cry and will fulfill His will. In my opinion, in any family, church, business, or organization, there are three classes of people: (1) The first class of people are the 'peacemakers'. They love peace and seek peace, not conflict and strife, at home, at church, at work, or in any human relationship. (2) The second group of people are the “peacekeepers.” These are also peace-loving people. These are those who try to keep peace by any means, especially in groups or relationships where there are elements of conflict and conflict. (3) The problem, however, is the third group of people. They are 'peace breakers'. These are those who hate peace. Driven by a fighting desire, they love to quarrel

and fight. If there are more peacemakers and peacekeepers in the church, the church will be able to keep its unity in the Lord better. However, if there are many peace-breakers in the church, the church will inevitably experience division amid conflicts and strife. And those who break this peace will have no choice but to live a life of hiding the glory of God rather than giving glory to God even when they go out into the world.

Many of us, Christians, now fail to glorify God because our light does not shine before people as Jesus said in Matthew 5:16. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus commanded us: "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." What does it mean? It means that we, the disciples of Jesus who follow Jesus, should shine the light of good deeds into the world. Therefore, we must make the world see our good deeds and give glory to our Heavenly Father. Then, what is the light of good deeds that we should shine on this world? The light of that good deed is the deeds of Jesus. In other words, we are to shine the light of Jesus into the world so that the world can see our deeds and glorify our Heavenly Father. So, what was Jesus doing? It is the love of God and the love of neighbor. And if I could describe God's love and neighborly love in one word, it would be peacemaking.

We should live by following Jesus by imitating the actions of Jesus. Then, Jesus' actions are peacemakers. How are you and I living a life of peace at home, at work, and in relationships with neighbors? In today's text, Matthew 5:9, Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." Are we really living the blessed life of peacemakers? There must be peace in the community, the church. As members of the community, we must strive to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). In order to do this, we must do it with all humility and meekness (v. 2). We must be patient, bearing with one another in love (v. 2). Why don't we bear with one another? Why don't we forgive each other? If we are now breaking the peace of the community through hatred, arrogance, and not being patient, it is not pleasing to God at all. To please God, we must love one another. We must humbly and meekly forgive one another. Just as God has forgiven sinners like us, we must forgive one another. In this way, we will be able to keep the peace of the community well. We must love one another with the heart of Christ. Jesus reconciled us to God by dying on the cross while we were still enemies with God and while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8, 10). Also, Jesus made the Jews and the Gentiles one, destroying the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (Eph. 2:14), and create in himself one new man out of the two, making peace (v. 15). So now we both have access to the Father by one Spirit (v. 18). Therefore, Jesus is our peace (v.14).

If we are to follow Jesus as His disciples, we must be peacemakers, as Jesus said. And the responsibility of the peacemaker is to reconcile sinners to God. Why? Look at 2 Corinthians 5:18 – "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." The reason we must reconcile sinners to God is because God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. As those who have received this ministry, we need to reconcile them to God because we preach the word of reconciliation (v. 19) to unbelievers. When sinners hear the gospel by God's grace and are justified by believing in Jesus, they can enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). Also, since we live a life worthy of the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ, we need

to reconcile people who are enemies of each other. Just as Jesus Christ broke down the barriers between the Jews and the Gentiles, who were enemies, and reconciled the two (Eph. 2:14-15), as disciples of Jesus, we must reconcile the relationship between people. This is what Jesus said in Matthew 5:23-24: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.” Therefore, we must make every effort to do what leads to peace (Rom.14:19). The Bible Hebrews 12:14 tells us: “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.” According to the word of Jesus, the blessing that is given to the peacemakers is that “they will be called sons of God” (Mt.5:9). Jesus is saying that the peacemaker will be called sons of God. This word of Jesus does not mean that we must make peace in order to become sons of God. The reason is because we can become son of God only through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Gal. 3:26). What Jesus is saying here is that you and I, who have already become children of God by believing in Jesus Christ, make peace according to the word of Jesus, so that we must show that we are children of God (MacDonald). In other words, if we, as children of God, are breaking peace rather than making peace, we are not showing the world that we are children of God. When we make peace according to the command of Jesus, we are doing the work of the God of peace (Barclay). What a blessing this is. How great a grace and blessing is it that we can do God's work? When we do the work of peace, which is God's work, we declare that we are children of the God in this world. And our God will be glorified.

Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in California, known as one of the world's most famous churches, introduced the secret of how to create a peaceful church (Internet). He said that one of the reasons why Saddleback Church was able to grow was because they continued to maintain a peaceful atmosphere, and emphasized that the harmony of the church is an important issue directly related to growth. Then, based on Romans 14, he divided the secret of pastoring into the peaceful church into six categories: (1) Encourage and support each other, (2) Recognize and respect each other, (3) Focus on what really matters, (4) Be a servant with love, (5) Do not force your thoughts on others, and (6) Live by faith. What does it mean to live by faith? It is living obedience to the word of the Lord. What is the word of the Lord? That is, to be a peacemaker. We all have the ministry of reconciliation to the Lord. Therefore, as we strive to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit through the bond of peace, I hope and pray that you and I will be worthy to be called sons and daughters of God.

Eight blessings (8): The blessing of those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness

[Matthew 5:10-12]

Have you ever been tortured and hurt because you believe in Jesus? Have you ever been harmed by the world because of your beliefs and creeds? Last Tuesday, at a meeting of the presbytery to which our church belongs, the wife of a senior pastor spoke briefly about getting permission from the presbytery members and running for the ABC Board of Education election. According to that senior pastor's wife, transgender students in California public schools are now legally guaranteed the right to choose the bathroom according to their gender of choice. California's current governor, Jerry Brown, signed the bill (AB1266), which will take effect in January 2014. Since she clearly expresses her opposition to this, I think she is likely to encounter difficult things during the election.

As we live in this world, if we do not compromise with the world and try to live according to the Jesus we believe in, we will inevitably make many enemies. We cannot deny the fact that there are people who hate us, slander us, and try to harm us when we obey the truth of the Bible we believe in. Even though you know it will be hard, difficult, painful, and persecuted, will you continue to follow the Jesus you believe in? Do you want to continue living a good life of faith? Will you continue to live in obedience to the Word of God you believe in?

In today's text, Matthew 5:10-12, the Bible speaks of "heaven," the last eighth blessing among the eight blessings Jesus taught. At the same time, today's text is talking about the fourth and last of Jesus' four demands (commands). The fourth and final demand is 'Be persecuted for the sake of righteousness.'

Did you know that Christians are still being persecuted in the 21st century? According to '2003 Mission Trends in the 20th and 21st Century' published by Missionary David Barrett and the Overseas Ministries Study Center (OMSC), the number of Christian martyrs this year will reach 166,000. It is said that in 2000, three years ago, the number of martyrs was 160,000. The number of martyrs has increased by 1.24% per year for the past three years. If this trend continues, it is predicted that by 2025, a whopping 210,000 people will be martyred. Most of the

regions where martyrs occurred are countries that persecute Christians: North Korea Saudi Arabia Vietnam Laos Turkmenistan Pakistan Bhutan Maldives Somalia etc. Why are so many Christians persecuted and martyred? Isn't that because of faith in Jesus Christ? Most of the Arab Muslim countries are religious extremists, active in persecution of Christians. Saudi Arabia is the most closed Muslim country with the most severe persecution of Christianity. All citizens are forced by the state to become Muslims, and anyone who converts to another religion is sentenced to death. Violence against churches and Christians by armed Islamic groups is frequent in vulnerable areas in Asia and Africa, such as Pakistan, Sudan, Nigeria and Indonesia. Remaining communist countries such as China, North Korea, Laos, Vietnam and Cuba also threaten and oppress the Christian Church (Internet). However, there are Christians who are being threatened, oppressed, and persecuted in this way, and there are Christians in this world who are not persecuted in this world, where religious freedom is guaranteed and there are no major financial difficulties. Then, you and I, who are living in a country where religious freedom is guaranteed and economically prosperous like the United States, have been blessed by God? Isn't it? Suffering or persecution for faith in Jesus Christ is never a curse. Rather, it is a blessing. This is because, firstly, Christians who are persecuted participate in the sufferings of Jesus on the cross, and secondly, because their faith is purified through suffering and persecution, suffering is God's blessing. Also, suffering and persecution are blessings because suffering and persecution serve as an opportunity for Christians to experience God's presence and the comfort and power of the Holy Spirit more deeply (Internet).

In today's text, Matthew 5:10, Jesus says that blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness. What does "for the sake of righteousness" mean here? As we have already learned from Jesus' words in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." The word "righteousness" has three major meanings. Among the three meanings, the first meaning, "righteousness," "what is right," or "justice," is the word "righteousness" in Matthew 5:10 means. In other words, what Jesus is saying in Matthew 5:10 is that blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, what is right or justice. Isn't it proper for us Christians to do righteousness, that is, to do what is right or justice as Jesus said? If we, as His disciples, want to follow Jesus, then of course we must do what is right, right? I am sure everybody knows this. Nevertheless, we often hesitate in doing what is right (justice), and sometimes we even compromise with the world and do what we know is not right in God's sight. As a result, we suffer. At that time, as Christians, we should not at least think that it is unfair that we have to suffer this way. Why? The reason is because we have not done what is right (justice). Therefore, when we are smitten by God for our sins, we should think that it is a natural result that we suffer. This reminds me of 1 Peter 2:19-20: "For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God." In addition to this verse, 1 Peter 3:17 in the Bible says this: "and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame." Don't you think that's a reasonable thing to say? Isn't it of course better to suffer for doing good than to suffer for doing evil? When we suffer unjustly for the sake of righteousness and suffer persecution, if we endure sorrow and

pain by thinking of God, it is beautiful in the sight of God. To understand in more detail what Jesus said in Matthew 5:10, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,” we have to look at the next verse, Matthew 5:11 – “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.” This verse 11 explains verse 10 in more detail. In other words, in verse 10, Jesus said that blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. The phrase “persecuted for the sake of righteousness” here means “because of Me” (v. 11), that is, because of Jesus. And to be persecuted because of Jesus means that we Christians are reviled and persecuted by the world for the life of faith that we believe in and follow Jesus, and falsely they say all kinds of evil against us.

In fact, if we look back on history, we can see that the Christians of the Early Church suffered a lot of persecution from the Roman emperors. Among those Roman emperors, Emperor Nero (reigned 54-68), famous as a tyrant, blamed and slaughtered innocent Christians, and was the emperor who fiercely promoted the murder of the apostles. And Emperor Domitian (reigned 81-96), who called himself 'Dominus et Deus' and ordered the worship of the emperor, severely persecuted the disobedient saints. Persecution continued for hundreds of years, and all Christian meetings were banned. During the reign of Emperor Diocletian (reigned 284–305), four edicts were issued: (1) Destroy Christian chapels, burn Christian books, and remove from office anyone professing the faith, (2) Arrest all pastors and staff of the church and put them in prison, (3) On the day of the sacrifice, the prison doors will be opened and Christians who offer sacrifices to various gods will be released, and those who refuse will be tortured, (4) All the people of the Roman Empire will bow down to the gods and make sacrifices. It is said that cruel torture was inflicted on Christians who did not yield to this, regardless of age or gender. It is said that after being whipped, they were thrown into the food of bloodthirsty beasts, burned at the stake, and slaughtered in a horrific and barbaric way. The bodies were left unattended and burned or thrown into rivers. In the end, the Roman Empire tried to eradicate Christianity through government power (Internet). This reminds me of Hebrews 11:33-38: “who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated -- the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.” The Bible records that our fathers of faith were tortured severely in order to obtain a better resurrection, but did not want to be released. They were not only ridiculed and whipped, but also tried in bondage and imprisonment. They suffered privation, tribulation, abuse, and even death (martyr). The Bible says that the world cannot bear such people of faith.

Even in the midst of tribulation and persecution, the early church members kept their faith. And they considered that tribulation and persecution a glory, and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ wherever they were

every day. Shouldn't this be the life of our faith? I remember the lyrics of the hymn "Faith of Our Fathers" verse 1: "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." In today's text, Matthew 5:12, Jesus says, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." We should rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted for the sake of righteousness. When we are persecuted because of Jesus, we should rejoice and be glad. Why? The reason is because our reward in heaven will be great. Therefore, like Moses, the father of faith, we look to the reward (Heb. 11:26), so we should prefer to suffer with God's people in faith rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin in this world for a while (v. 25). Through faith, we must consider the reproach we receive for Christ's sake (v. 26) and all the persecutions we receive for Christ's sake (Mt. 5:11) as greater riches than all the treasures of this world (Heb. 11:26). Then, on the day when the Lord comes again, the Lord will allow us to enter the eighth blessing, which is the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:10).

A few weeks ago, while having a conversation with my daughter, I told her about Pastor Gi-cheol Joo who is a martyr of Korea. At that time, I remember that the reason I even told my daughter about Pastor Joo was because she asked me this question: 'What will you do?' She asked me this question because I told her what my friend asked me. When I met my friend the weekend before, he said to me, 'What would you say if a gay man came to you and asked you to officiate?' When my daughter heard that question, she asked me, 'What will you do?' So I told her that I would say "No," because what the Bible teaches is that a man and a woman get married. And I told her what I remembered, the movie about Pastor Joo that I saw when I was a child. I told my daughter about the martyred Pastor Joo, who is a precious example of our Korean faith. Pastor Gi-cheol Joo was born on November 25, 1897, and died on April 21, 1944, at the age of 47, for opposing Japanese shrine worship (Internet). His fourth son, Elder Gwang-jo Joo, wrote these words from his father's martyrdom testimonies: 'Pastor Joo did not die because of weakness, lack of strength, or ignorance. He just died because he couldn't be dumb when he had to say it, and because he didn't want to run or dodge the way he was supposed to, and he couldn't survive this hour when he was supposed to die. Only he who bears the cross with Jesus Christ can share glory with Jesus Christ.' The phrase 'He just died because he couldn't be dumb when he had to say it, and because he didn't want to run or dodge the way he was supposed to, and he couldn't survive this hour when he was supposed to die' comes to my mind. What comes to my mind even more is Pastor Joo's prison prayer. Among the five prayer topics, I would like to share with you the contents of the 1st prayer, the 4th prayer, and the 5th prayer, especially in relation to today's Word (Internet): (1) First, help me to overcome the power of death. I am on the verge of death. Black hands trying to take my life are coming every moment. Faced with death, I cannot but pray, 'Please help me to overcome the power of death.' All living things groan in the face of death, and all living things tremble and mourn in the face of death. How many people have forsaken righteousness for fear of death and have forsaken faith in order to escape death? The Lord's disciple Peter was also afraid of death, so he denied Jesus in the court of Caiaphas and swore that he did not know even before the maidservant. But for the sake of the Lord, it is good to die a hundred times, but what kind of life is that if I forsake the Lord and live for a hundred or a thousand years! Oh Lord! Please spare this life so that it will

not be dishonored to the Lord. Jesus died on the cross for me. He had a crown of thorns on his head, his hands and feet were torn by iron nails, and he shed the last drop of blood. Lord, you died for me, so how can I pretend to be ignorant of You because I am afraid of death? I am ready to die. O Lord, who died on the cross and rose from the grave on the third day, Jesus who overcame the power of death! I also believe in the resurrection and put the power of death under Your feet. Death, where is your sting? I believe in the risen Jesus, and I will rise again. A pine tree is green when it is picked before it dies, and a lily is fragrant when it falls before it withers. John the Baptist was 33 years old, and Stephen was sprinkled with the hot blood of a young man. Before this body also withers, it shall be sacrificed on the altar of the Lord. (4) Fourth, let us live in righteousness and die in righteousness. I can't, I can't. The bride of Christ cannot lose her fidelity because of idols. I grew up in Jesus when I was young, and I swore ten or a hundred times to dedicate myself to Jesus. Today, when God's commandments are broken and the name of Jesus falls to the ground while eating and receiving glory in the name of Jesus, how can this body be able to escape from death? Ah! The name of my Lord Jesus is falling to the ground. Pyongyang! Pyongyang! Courtesy to the east, my Jerusalem! Glory departed from you. Moranbong, weep! Daedong River, let's cry together with me as we turn one hundred years old! Give, give. I give even this life to the Lord. Does the blade wait for me? I will go towards that blade. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?" No one will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Dear friends, Jesus is alive. Let us die for Jesus, and live for Jesus. (5) Fifth, I entrust my soul to the Lord. Oh! Lord Jesus, I entrust my soul to You. Receive my soul as I fall while holding onto the cross. Receive my soul, in prison or in death row, when my life is cut off. Your house is my home, and Your Kingdom is my hometown. Wash my feet from the dirty ground so that I can walk on the golden road of heaven, and cleanse me from the troubles in the world of sin so that I can stand on the condition of glory. I entrust my soul to you. Amen.

Let's not be the Christians who lost the taste.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men” (Matthew 5:13).

I was taught by meditating on Matthew 4:18-22 under the title “Jesus who called us.” I was instructed that Jesus was calling me just as He called Peter, his brother Andrew, James, and his brother John (vv. 18, 21). I learned that there is a promise of Jesus in His call, "Come, follow me" (v. 19). And that promise was “I will make you fishers of men” (v. 19). In this way, Jesus is giving us higher calling. How should we respond? Like Peter, Andrew, James, and John, we must immediately leave things behind and follow Jesus. We must leave and follow Jesus like Peter, Andrew, James and John who left their nets (v. 20), the boat, and even their father (v. 22).

Look at Matthew 5:13. Jesus is saying: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.” Based on this word, I would like to meditate on the Word of God under the title “Let's not be the Christians who lost the taste” and receive the lessons that Jesus gives us

Jesus is saying that we are the salt of the earth (v. 13). What does it mean that we are the salt of the earth? We must be the Jesus' disciples who bring out a distinctive flavor in this world. What is the taste of the salt? It is salty taste. The Korean drama ‘Jumong’ shows that salt was used as an important means of sale in Korea long time ago. Perhaps in those days, salt was used as a wage for labor, and it was possible to buy what was needed with salt. The English word “salary” is also said to come from salt (Internet). That's how salt is so important. In fact, we are very important and precious like salt. We Christians are very important people in this world. The salt flavors food and also helps prevent food decomposition. Foods that are salted over 12% by weight can be stored for a long time without going bad (Internet). The salt also plays the following role (Internet): (1) It promotes metabolism. The salt leads metabolism to break down food and excrete waste products. When metabolism does not go smoothly, blood is acidified and immunity is low, so there is a high probability of getting various diseases. (2) It helps the production

of red blood cells and cleans the blood vessels. If there is insufficient salt intake, then not only our body is indigestible but also lacks iron which will result in not producing of the red blood cells that results in anemia. The salt prevents arteriosclerosis and high blood pressure. (3) It balances body fluids. The salt controls moisture appropriately to prevent metabolism from being acidic or alkaline and absorbs and save the nutrients. (4) It helps digestion. The salt enhances the function of the intestine by removing impurities attached to the stomach and the barrier, helping the intestinal fluidity and preventing abnormal fermentation in the intestine. It ensures the nutrients to be evenly supplied to our body. (5) It functions as detoxification and sterilization. The salt increases the body's resistance to invading cells and blood vessels even if harmful substances or bacteria enter the body. (6) It has antipyretic and geothermal effects. If you apply salt to the bleeding area with abrasions, you will see the blood clot quickly. This is because salt has antipyretic and geothermal effects in the body. (7) It produces cells. The salt quickly restores dead or destroyed cells. Good salt with clean water will help our body revitalization and it can also be effective in eliminating skin problems such as acne. (8) It supplies minerals. Minerals that cleanse the blood vessels of the human body, help digestion, and help the intestines function to prevent protein from being excreted in the urine are essential to our human body. The salt provides minerals at least little bit.

We Christians are indispensable people in this world because we have a role to make the world taste good with the gospel and to prevent our society from being corrupted (Park). In reality, however, we don't seem to be able to meet this responsibility. Although our lips seem to preach the gospel, but our lives don't live a life worthy of the gospel. Furthermore, we are now corrupting the society rather than preventing the corruption of the society in which we live. In short, now we Christians are not playing the role of salt in this world. We are like salt that has lost its taste. To us, Jesus in Matthew 5:13 "... if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men." Like the salt that lost its salty taste, it seems we become useless in this world. What should we do? First we must repent. And we must restore the taste of salt. Thus, we must be salty Christians in this world. I hope and pray that we who have lost our taste in this world may be able to bring out the distinctive flavor of the gospel of Jesus Christ and faithfully take on the role of preventing the corruption of this society.

‘They may see your good deeds’

[Matthew 5:14-16]

We have already received a lesson from God while meditating on the word of God under the title of “Let’s not be the Christians who lost the taste” based on Matthew 5:13. One of them is that God taught us that we, as the salt of the world, should live a life that brings out the distinctive flavor of the gospel of Jesus Christ and faithfully take on the role of preventing the corruption of this society. In order to do that, we learned that we must not only preach the gospel of Jesus Christ with our lips, but also live a life worthy of the gospel with our lives. Today, I would like to receive a lesson from God to you and me under the title “they may see your good deeds” based on the text of Matthew 5:14-16.

Look at Matthew 5:16 – “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Jesus tells us to let our light shine before men (v. 16). Here, the phrase “In the same way” refers to today’s text Matthew 5:14-15: “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.” That is, Jesus said that we should let our light shine before men (v. 16). Just as a man lights a lamp and puts it on a lampstand, not under a bowl, so that it can shine on everyone in the house, so the disciples of Jesus should shine the light to the world. Why should we shine the light to the world? It is because we are the light of the world (v. 14). Then why have we become the light of the world? Look at John 8:12 – “When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” The reason we became the light of the world is because Jesus, the Light of the world, gave us the light of life by dying on the cross and resurrecting for us. Here, “life” refers to eternal life. In other words, we have received eternal life by believing in Jesus by God’s exclusive grace, and that eternal life is the light of people (Jn. 1:4), so we must shine the light to the people of this world. Then, as the light of the world, what kind of light should we shine on the people of this world? It is our good deeds (5:16). We, as the light of the world, shine our good deeds into the world, so that the world may see and glorify our Heavenly Father. I have thought of this good deed in three short ways in the context of today’s text alone:

First, good deeds is living a life of harmony between words and deeds.

Look at Matthew 5:19 – “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” We must obey God's commandments. We must not obey only with our lips. We must obey the Lord's commandments by our actions. This is how we do the Lord's will. And when we do the will of the Lord, we live a righteous life (v. 20).

Second, good deeds are living a loving life.

What is love life? It is not easily angered with the brother (1 Cor.13:5). Look at Matthew 5:21-22: “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.” Also, to love our brother is to live in harmony with him. Look at Matthew 5:23-24: “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.” And the loving life is not only to love our brothers but also our enemy. Look at Matthew 5:43-44: “You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” As Christians, we should not only love those who love us (v. 46). Such love is a love that even non-believers who do not believe in Jesus know how to do (v. 47). We must love our enemy, just as Jesus loved us who were His enemies (Rom. 5:10).

Third, good deeds is living a holy life.

Read Matthew 5:27-28: “You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” We are God's holy people. Therefore, we must be holy just as God is holy. And there must be no adultery in that holy life. In the Old Testament, God commanded not to commit adultery. But in the New Testament, Jesus says that anyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Also, Jesus is saying that if we divorce our spouse without marital unfaithfulness, we are making our spouse commit adultery (v. 32). And whoever marries the divorced spouse commits adultery (v. 32).

We are the light of the world. As the light of the world, we must shine the light of Jesus Christ in this dark world. To do that, we must obey the commandment of Jesus. What is Jesus' commandment? The commandment of Jesus is that our good deeds may be seen by the world, so that they may glorify our Heavenly Father (v. 16). To that end, I hope that we should live a life of harmony of words and deeds, a life of love, and a holy life.

‘When you pray’

[Matthew 6:5-8]

What do you think Americans are tempted by? (Internet) According to the First Barna survey of 2013, the most common temptations Americans receive are ‘anxiety and worry’ (60%) and ‘procrastination’ (60%). The following temptations were surveyed as ‘overeating’ (55%), ‘spending too much time in the media’ (44%), and ‘laziness and avoidance of work’ (41%). However, the most common temptation for American Protestants was ‘overeating’ (66%), followed by ‘anxiety and worry’ (58%). Then, a survey was conducted on how Americans avoid these temptations. According to the results of the survey, the most common way to avoid temptation was ‘There is not much’ (59%). However, the most common answer among Protestants was ‘Praying to God’ (18%). When I thought about the results of this survey, I wondered if, for some reason, we were not seeing temptation as a temptation. Also I think we Protestants are not doing much to pray to avoid temptation.

Are you praying to God? All of us who want to follow Jesus must make every effort to pray to our Heavenly Father like Jesus did. And just as Jesus asked Heavenly Father on the Mount of Olives “Not my will, but your will be done” (Mt. 26:39, 42; Lk. 22:42), we also should also have a habit of praying to God for His will be done and not our will. So, when we actually pray, we must get into the habit of praying, ‘Lord, not my will, but Your will be done.’ Therefore, I hope and pray that only the Lord to be glorified because His will is done through our lives.

In today's text, Matthew 6:5-8, Jesus is teaching us about prayer. As we meditate on these three teachings of Jesus, I hope and pray that you and I will be able to receive and practice the lessons the Lord gives us and pray according to the Lord's will.

First, when we pray we must not be like hypocrites.

Look at Matthew 6:5 – “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.” How to pray like the hypocrite? It's like standing in the synagogue and on the street corners to pray to be seen by people. Then, why does the hypocrite like to stand in the synagogue and on the street corner to pray so that

people can see them? I found the answer in Matthew 6:2 – “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.” In other words, the reason why the hypocrite prays in the synagogues and on the streets in order to be seen by people is because they want to be honored by them. To this hypocrite, Jesus said in Matthew 6:5, the second half “they have received their reward in full.” What rewards have the hypocrite already received? It is none other than what they are shown to people. That's it. God never rewards them. Rather, God will judge them (MacArthur).

If we look at the meaning of the original Greek word “hypocrite”, it means ‘one who acts pretently’ (pretender) (Swanson). For example, the hypocrite is a person who is unholy but pretends to be holy, and who is ungodly but pretends to be godly. The hypocrite pretends to have good faith even though he doesn't have good faith, pretends to know a lot without knowing much of the Bible, pretends to pray a lot without praying much, etc. The hypocrite acts like a movie star, pretending to be someone other than himself. The hypocrite does well in religious ceremonies in his religious life. But he does not truly love God in his heart, nor does he love his neighbors. Regarding this hypocrite, Jesus said in Matthew 15:8 – “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” In other words, the hypocrites, such as the Pharisees and scribes, seem to be very good at praying to God with their lips, but in reality their heart is praying to be seen by others. That's why they seem righteous in front of people. But in reality, their actions in life don't even try to live up to what they prayed for. Regarding this prayer, the writer of Proverbs says in Proverbs 28:9 – “If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable.”

We should not pray to be seen by people. We should not pray in a church or large gathering where there are many people to be glorified by people. God would never hear such prayers. We must pray in a way that is acceptable in the sight of God. What is the prayer that is acceptable in the sight of God? It is a prayer offered to God with a sincere heart (ref.: 1 Cor.14:15), giving up all hypocrisy. Prayers to God with the sincere heart are prayers offered while listening to and obeying His commandments. This is praying in the Spirit as the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:18. That is, we must offer prayers to God while obeying the word of truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Second, when we pray we should pray to our Father in secret.

Look at Matthew 6:6 – “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Do you believe this word of Jesus? Do you believe the saying, “your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you”? Personally, I like Moses among the people of faith in Hebrews 11, the chapter of faith. Look at Hebrews 11:24-26: “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.” By faith

Moses refused, by faith Moses suffered, and by faith Moses was humiliated. Why did Moses do that? It was because Moses looked ahead to his reward. In other words, Moses did not look to the reward of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, of the princesses of Pharaoh, etc. in this world. But looked at the rewards he would receive from God as he longed for a better country – a heavenly one, he refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, suffered with God's people, and were reproached for Christ's sake. But what about us now? Are we not too lacking in this kind of Moses' faith? Why do we keep looking (expecting) to be rewarded by people rather than being rewarded by God? The reason is because many of us Christians are now busy living the church life in front of people whom we can see rather than living by faith in the presence of our invisible God. One example of this is the prayer mentioned in today's text Matthew 6:5-8. Now we are praying to be seen by people. Jesus is saying this is hypocrisy. Therefore, Jesus is telling us not to pray like the hypocrite like this (v. 5). He is telling us that when we pray, go into our closet, close the door, and pray to our Heavenly Father who is in secret. Why? It is because our Heavenly Father, who sees in secret, will reward us.

Please do not misunderstand. Now Jesus is absolutely not telling us not to pray publicly. But Jesus is telling us not to pray like the hypocrite who prays to be seen by people in his public prayer. In particular, Jesus is telling us not to pray such hypocritical prayers like the Pharisees and scribes, in order to be seen by people in order to be glorified by them. In order for us to pray publicly, we must have private prayer (Wiersbe). In other words, we should not just have the habit of public prayer without the habit of private prayer to God in secret. It's very dangerous. The reason is because such prayer habit will make us even more hypocritical. My heart is getting farther and farther away from God, because with my lips, I will pretend to live a life of faith so close to Him. Therefore, as Jesus said, when we pray, we should pray to our Heavenly Father who is in secret. We should never pray to be seen by people. To that end, I would like to suggest three things. Those three things are to go to a quiet place in a quiet time and pray to Heavenly Father in secret with a quiet heart. I hope and pray that we should be able to give this prayer habit.

Third and last, when we pray we must not keep on babbling.

Look at Matthew 6:7 – “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.” What do you think of prayer in tongues? One day, while meeting a junior and having a conversation, he was having a prayer meeting at the church, and the person next to him was praying as if he was praying in a different language. What do you think of prayer in tongues? One day, while meeting my friend and having a conversation, he said that when he was praying at her church, the person next to him was praying as if he was praying in a different language. So, he listened carefully to his prayer, and heard that he was speaking bad languages. When I heard that from my friend, I was was shocked. I personally have 1 Corinthians 14:19 in mind when I think about speaking in tongues: “But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.” I totally agree that it is better to speak five intelligible words to instruct than ten thousand words in a tongue that we do not understand. And Paul says in verse 28, “If

there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.” Why? The reason is because God is not a God of disorder but of peace (v. 33).

What Jesus is saying in Matthew 6:7 in today's text is that the disciples of Jesus who follow Jesus should not keep babbling like pagans when they pray. In other words, when we pray, we should not repeat what we have already said. Perhaps the Gentiles at that time repeated meaningless words when they prayed to their gods. They did this because they believed that if they spoke a lot when praying, their god would hear their prayers. One example is 1 Kings 18:29. If we look at that Bible verse, there is a scene where the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal fight on Mount Carmel. At that time, the prophets of Baal pray to Baal, but their god is not answered until midday. So they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. Is this prayer that we talk like crazy for such a long time? In Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, the Bible says: “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.” The Bible tells us not to be quick with our mouths before God. Therefore, when we pray to God, we should not open our mouths recklessly and say things out of a rush. We should say little when we pray. Heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask (Mt. 6:8).

One of the great pastors in Korean Christian history is Pastor Yangwon Son. When the Suncheon incident in Yeosu in October 1948, Pastor Son's two sons, both 6th and 2nd graders, were shot by a left-wing student. A book was published titled 'The Atomic Bomb of Love,' which tells the story of his life, who forgave that left-wing student who killed his two sons and raised their killer as an evangelist as an adopted son. This story was also made into a movie in 1966. There are 10 prayers of thanksgiving that Pastor Yangwon Son gave at the funeral of his two sons, and I would like to share them with you (Internet):

- (1) I thank God for allowing martyrdom children to come out of the bloodline of a sinner like me.
- (2) I thank God for my blessing in dedicating the two most beautiful sons among three sons and three daughters, the eldest and the second son.
- (3) Among the many saints, how could the Lord have given me such a treasure? I also thank the Lord for that.
- (4) I thank God because it is said that the martyrdom of one son is precious, much less the martyrdom of two sons.
- (5) It is said that it is a great blessing to lie down and die while believing in Jesus. How much less will we be shot and martyred while preaching. Thank God.
- (6) I am thankful that my son, who was preparing to study in the United States, went to a better heaven than the United States.
- (7) I thank God for giving me the heart of love to help my enemy who shot my two sons to repent.

- (8) I believe that there will be countless sons in the kingdom of heaven through the martyrdom of my two sons. Thank you, God our Father.
- (9) I thank my Lord Jesus Christ for giving me the joy of finding the eight truths and the love of God in the midst of adversity.
- (10) I give all the glory to God who has blessed me with undeserved blessings.

‘Pray in this way’

[Matthew 6:9-13]

We were taught by Jesus about prayer by focusing on Matthew 6:5-8 under the title ‘when you pray.’ We received three lessons from Jesus about prayer: (1) When we pray we must not be like hypocrites. Jesus was pointing out the wrong public prayers of the Jews (Seyoon Kim). Jesus is telling us not to pray hypocritically like the Pharisees and the scribes. (2) When we pray we should pray to our Father in secret. This is the lesson that Jesus taught the Jews to pray right after pointing out their wrong public prayers. We must pray to our Heavenly Father in secret. (3) When we pray we must not keep on babbling. This lesson Jesus pointed out to the wrong prayers of the Gentiles. In this way, after pointing out the wrong prayers of the Gentiles, Jesus comes to verse 8 and teaches the correct prayer: “So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” In other words, Jesus is telling us not to repeat our prayers like the Gentiles, because God the Father knows what we need. Therefore, when we pray like the Gentiles, we should not pray by repeating meaningless words over and over again. After all, when Jesus came to verse 8 and said, “do not be like them,” he is teaching the lesson not to imitate the hypocritical public prayers of the Jews or the babbling prayers of the Gentiles. After that, Jesus is teaching us the Lord’s Prayer by saying, “Pray, then in this way” in today’s text, Matthew 6:9. This prayer is the Lord’s Prayer that we often offer to God.

I would like to meditate on the Lord's Prayer that Jesus teaches us, focusing on Matthew 6:9-13. As we meditate on the Lord's Prayer in four ways, I hope and pray that we will receive the lessons the Lord is teaching us so that we can all pray right in the Lord's sight.

The first thing we need to think about is to whom we should pray. We must pray to our Father in heaven.

Look at Matthew 6:9 – “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven,’” Who is the God in heaven, the object of our prayer? It is our ‘Father’, our ‘Dad’. Last Monday, a holiday commemorating Pastor Martin Luther King. I was driving to a restaurant with my family to eat. My youngest daughter, Karis, saw a donut shop on the way and said to me, ‘Dad, can you buy me donuts?’ So I told Karis that we should have dinner first and

then talk. However, I heard Karis talking about donuts several times during dinner, and this thought occurred to me: 'When we pray to our Heavenly Father, we need to pray and be patience until He answers our prayer.' Then I said this in front of my family members while eating: 'Are you sure I will buy Karis donuts?' After all, I went to the donut shop near the restaurant and bought 12 donuts with drive thru. Then, as I drove home, I asked Karis, 'How many times did you say donuts to your father?' The child was quiet. I noticed that she was counting with her head. Haha. And she said later was '8'. Haha. If we look at Luke 11:11-13, Jesus is saying this: "Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" Which father will give his child a snake when he asks for fish? Even though we are evil, if we know how to give good things to our children, won't our heavenly Father give good things to us who ask for it? Do you have assurance in answering this prayer while praying to Heavenly Father? In today's text, Matthew 6:9, in the prayer Jesus teaches, what is the expression of 'Abba' ("Father"), the object of our prayer? That expression is the language in which a child calls his father in a friendly way, and in the Bible, it is an expression of covenant theology (Kim). The Bible describes the relationship between God and Israel in several ways. For example, the Bible describes God as a King and Israel as God's people. The Bible also describes God as a shepherd and Israel as a flock. However, in Matthew 6:9, the expression of God as 'Father' or 'Abba' is referring to Israel as the sons of God. In other words, God, the object of our prayers, is our Father, and we are His sons and daughters (children). We are children of God. And God is our Father. This unique relationship is that we become God's adoptees through the death on the cross and resurrection of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. So the Apostle Paul says in Romans 8:15-16 and Galatians 4:6: "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:15-16), "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal. 4:6). What does it mean to be children of God? That means we are the heirs. By heir we mean we can inherit all of our Father's wealth. Dr. Seyoon Kim says: 'Inheriting means that we can draw upon God's riches that are never lacking. The act of us as creatures trying to draw upon the riches of God the Creator, that is prayer' (Kim).

As we pray to our Heavenly Father, we must keep in mind that the Heavenly Father, the object of our prayers, is our Father who are in heaven. What this emphasizes is that it emphasizes the transcendence of God. In other words, praying while calling the God to whom we pray 'Father' or 'Abba' emphasizes intimacy. But when we pray "Our Father who is in heaven" emphasizes the transcendence of God (Kim). In other words, our Heavenly Father, the object of our prayers, is a God whom we can pray with intimacy, but at the same time He is also a God whom we should revere. Because that God is our Father, we must pray to our Heavenly Father with an attitude of dependence and obedience. Also, we must pray to Heavenly Father with confident of His love (Kim). This loving Heavenly Father is the Heavenly Father who knows everything we need, according to Matthew 6:8. Also, our Heavenly Father feeds us (v. 26). He is our nurturer. And He is the Heavenly Father who knows everything we need, including food, drink, and clothing (v. 32). We are praying to our Father who is in heaven.

Second, what we need to consider in the Lord's Prayer is the three 'your' petitions.

If we look at the Lord's Prayer in today's text, there are three 'Your' petitions in verses 9 and 10: (1) "Hallowed be Your name" (v. 9), (2) "Your kingdom come" (v. 10) and (3) "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (v. 10).

(1) The first petition is "Hallowed by Your name."

The "name" here refers to God Himself. In other words, as God revealed Himself in His name (Exod. 3:13), to know God's name is to know God. Therefore, the name of God is God Himself (Kim). Jesus is teaching us that we should pray to God that His name be hallowed. Because we are on earth and our Father is in heaven, to pray that the name of our Heavenly Father, who is the Transcendent, be hallowed means that we should pray to God in reverence for our Heavenly Father. And when we pray in reverence to our Heavenly Father, we must commit ourselves to living a holy life on earth as God is holy. But if we do not have the fear of God, we will not live holy lives on this earth. Furthermore, we will fall into the folly of committing the sin of idolatry by glorifying ourselves rather than glorifying God (Kim). Our prayers to our Heavenly Father, "Hallowed be thy name," mean that we pray to our Heavenly Father in humility and reverence, acknowledging that our Heavenly Father is the holy God in heaven. This prayer also instructs us to live as Heavenly Father's holy people, exalting God's holy name on this earth. D

But now, when I think about how God is speaking to us, I remembered Ezekiel 36:20- "When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.'" As we do not fear God like the Israelites in Ezekiel's time, we commit the sin of idolatry, so we not only defile ourselves, but also defile God's holy name in the world. But we have the hope. Look at Ezekiel 36:21-23: "But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went. Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD,' declares the Lord GOD, 'when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.'" God cleansed us by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross, cleansing us from all our filthiness and from all idolatry. Therefore, we have become God's holy people. As a result, under the guidance of God the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can pray to our Holy Father, "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name."

(2) The second petition is "Your kingdom come" (Mt. 6:10).

Among the prayers offered by the Jews at the time of Jesus, it is said that there were a shorter brother's prayer called "Kaddish" and a long-shaped prayer called '18th blessing prayer,' that is, "Shemone Esre" (Kim). If we look at the 18th blessing prayer, we can see how the Jews at the time of Jesus thought of the kingdom of God, which they prayed and waited for. They believed that when the Messiah comes, He would set the Jewish people free from the slavery of the Roman Empire, and would restore the Jewish nation. In addition, Jews believed that the coming of the Messiah would restore the golden age of the past Jewish history, restore the righteous judgment system of Judea, and lead to the reign of the wise sage. And they believed that the Messiah would come and sustain them as a community of pure faith that would not be mixed or denied by heretics, that is, the community of the people of God's righteous kingdom. In a word, the Jews at the time of Jesus viewed the restoration of Israel as the reign of God (Kim). Did Jesus Christ, the Messiah, come to this earth to restore Jewish nationalism, just as the Jews thought? Did Jesus really come to this earth for the political liberation, social justice, and economic prosperity of the Jewish people, as they thought? Among the prayers Jesus taught in the first half of Matthew 6:10, the prayer "Thy kingdom come" is a prayer for God's reign to come. In other words, this prayer is 'Let it come. Thy reign come' (Kim). However, the reign of God that Jesus is talking about here was by no means the nationalistic restoration that the Jews at that time had been praying and waiting for. It is a community of God's eschatological people under God's personal rule, not liberation from the slavery of the Roman Empire, but liberation from sin, eternal death, and Satan, and the glory of the eternal kingdom while enjoying all the rich spiritual blessings that come in Jesus Christ. The church of God ruled by God where righteousness is practiced is the kingdom of God. That is why Jesus is telling us this in Matthew 6:33 – "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." As we pray to our Father in heaven, "Your kingdom come", the prayer Jesus taught us, we must first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

(3) The third petition is "Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven" (v. 10).

This prayer teaches us that when we pray to our Heavenly Father, we must seek God's will completely. In this way, Jesus opened his mouth in today's text to teach us that we should seek God's will. In fact, the night before he died, when he prayed in a place called Gethsemane, he asked for God's will. Look at Matthew 26:39 – "And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.'" I was listening to the Gospel of John last week and noticed a bit of John 12:27-28: "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 'Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Jesus, who had asked Heavenly Father to spare him from this time, knew that he had come to this earth for this purpose, so he obeyed Heavenly Father's will until he died on the cross for the glory of Heavenly Father (Phil. 2:8). In this way, Jesus Himself not only gave us the example of praying for God's will, but also fulfilled His will even

by dying on the cross. Shouldn't we also pray for God's will like Jesus did? Just like the Lord's Prayer that Jesus is teaching in today's text, we should pray, 'God, Father, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. To do that, we have to let go of our own will. And we must seek God's will by discerning what God's good, pleasing, and perfect will is. To do this, as the Bible says in Romans 12:2, we must not be conformed to this generation, but we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). Then we will be able to pray to Heavenly Father that the will of God in heaven be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Third, what we need to consider in the Lord's Prayer is the three 'us' petitions.

In today's text, Matthew 6:11-13, there are three 'our' petitions: (1) "Give us this day our daily bread" (v. 11), (2) "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (v. 12), and (3) "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (v. 13).

(1) The first 'us' petition is "Give us this day our daily bread" (v. 11).

This prayer is a petition to 'Give us food today' and is set in the story of manna in Exodus chapter 16 (Kim). Look at Exodus 16:4 – "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction." The background of this word is that Moses said this (v. 4) when the Israelites who were in the wilderness at the time of the Exodus grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (vv. 2-3). In other words, God listened to the complaints of the people of Israel (vv. 8, 9, 12) and rained down food for them from heaven. God commanded them to gather only what each person could eat each day (v. 16). And Moses commanded the Israelites not to leave any of them until morning (v. 19). But they disobeyed Moses, and some kept the food until morning, and there were worms and became foul (v. 20). And God gave the heavenly food, but on the sixth day, so that each person could reap twice as much bread (vv. 5, 22). The reason God did this was that the seventh day after that was a holy Sabbath to the Lord (v. 23). So, the people of Israel gathered manna, the heavenly food, for six days, but on the seventh day they shouldn't have gone out to gather because God gave them twice as much bread on the sixth day. But in Exodus 16:27, the Bible says, "It came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none." Some of the Israelites disobeyed God's word.

When you pray to God, do you say, 'Thank you God for giving us (me) our daily bread today'? Or have any of you ever complained in front of the table, like a child, complaining about food, saying, 'Why is there nothing to eat?' As I meditated on Exodus 16 at the Morning Prayer meeting, I was amazed and thankful that God heard the complaints of the Israelites who complained that they were dying of hunger. And they

were amazed and thankful that God had provided them with manna, the heavenly food, while they were in the wilderness for 40 years (v. 35). Is it really that the Israelites, who had tested God and resented God countless times during those 40 years, did something well, so that God continued to provide their daily bread for 40 years? Rather, the Israelites sought food according to their greed and put God to the test in their hearts (Ps. 78:18). Nevertheless, God continued to give them their daily bread. If this is not God's grace, what is it? Are we not that different from the Israelites? Rather than giving thanks to God for giving us our daily bread, don't we complain out of dissatisfaction out of greed while living in this world? Furthermore, aren't there countless times when we do not keep and obey commandment of God who gives us our daily bread? Aren't we worried about what we will eat, especially as Jesus says in Matthew 6:25 and 31? Clearly, Jesus is saying that "'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'" worrying is what the Gentiles eagerly seek (vv. 31-32). But aren't we, in fact, anxious and seeking these things, like the non-believers in this world? Why are we seeking these things in worries? The reason is because we do not believe that our Heavenly Father knows that we need all these things (v. 32). It is this unbelief that ultimately leads us to complain to God in dissatisfaction and even disobey God's commandments.

What should we do? First, we must know and believe who our Heavenly Father is. Our Heavenly Father is a God who knows all our needs, including food, drink, and clothing. By believing in this God, we must pray to God, "Give us this day our daily bread" (v. 11). We should also pray because we thank God for giving us food today. We should never blame God because of greed in our hearts like the Israelites. Rather, we should pray with gratitude to God, who preserves our lives by giving us our daily bread. And we must first live a life that seeks the kingdom of God and His righteousness (v. 33). Then God will add all these things to us.

(2) The second 'us' petition is "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (v. 12).

If we pay close attention to this prayer, in Gospel of Matthew, the author Matthew says, "forgive us our debts" and in Luke 11:4, the author Luke says, "forgive us our sins." So how do we know if Jesus was speaking of "debts" or "sins" when he taught the Lord's Prayer? According to Dr. Seyoon Kim, a New Testament professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, Jesus originally said "debts" as the author Matthew said in Matthew 6:12. How to know this is because in the original Greek, in the second half of Luke 11:4, the author Luke also says, "For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us." Then why did the author Luke say of "our sins" in Luke 11:4, first half, when Jesus' original term was 'debts'? The reason is because Luke reflects this because the Jews viewed sin as a 'debt to God' and a 'debt to a neighbor'. In other words, the author Luke said, "Forgive us our sins" rather than saying, "Forgive us our

debts,” as the Jews thought sin was a debt to God (v. 4). The reason he wrote so to Gentiles who are not familiar with Jewish idioms is to make the issue of sin against God and neighbor fundamentally clear (Kim).

We are indebted to God. In other words, we are sinners against God. However, through the atoning death of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, on the cross, all of our sins who believe in Jesus were forgiven. Therefore, now we are debtors of love to God. How are we to live as we are indebted to God? As the commandment of Jesus, we must live loving our neighbors. What is life of loving our neighbors? It is to forgive our neighbors when they sin against us, just as our heavenly Father forgave our sins. So, after teaching the Lord's Prayer to Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus is saying this in verses 14-15: “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” What does it mean? Jesus actually commands us to forgive those who have offended us in our lives after we say the Lord's Prayer as He taught us. When we do this, God promises to forgive our sins. But in reality, it seems that when we offer the Lord's Prayer to God, we do not forgive a person who has wronged us or sinned against us. Jesus is saying that if we do, our Heavenly Father will not forgive us our transgressions. What should we do? We must forgive those who have sinned against us. Then God's forgiveness of sins will be revealed through us to our neighbors. As Jesus said in Luke 7:47, he who is forgiven little, loves little. But he whose many sins are forgiven by God, he loves God much. If we truly love God much, we will forgive much when our neighbor sins against us. But if we love God little, we will forgive little the sins our neighbors have committed against us. I hope and pray that all of us are full of God's love and love much, so that we can sincerely forgive those who have sinned against us.

(3) The third ‘us’ petition is “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Mt. 6:13).

This prayer is a prayer to not allow us to fall into temptation and to deliver (save) us from Satan (evil) (Kim). Why do we keep falling into temptation? The apostle James says in James 1:14-15: “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” What does it mean? We fall into temptation because we are drawn to our own lust. If we continue to be led by lust, we have no choice but to live in our former manner of life, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit (Eph. 4:22). Therefore, Satan continues to provoke our lust and tempt us today to make us sin against God. In particular, he is tempting us in three areas. The apostle John speaks of these three areas in 1 John 2:16 – “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.” Satan not only stimulates and tempts us with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, so that we cannot live a life that seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. But rather he makes us to seek the things of the world so that when lust has conceived, it

gives birth to sin. And when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death (Jam. 1:15). A good example is the scene in Genesis 3 where the woman eats the forbidden fruit. The Bible says in Genesis 3:6 – “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” When Eve saw the forbidden fruit, it was good for food (the lust of the flesh), was pleasant to the eyes (the lust of the eyes), and to be desired to make one wise (the pride of life). So she disobeyed God's command because she fell into the lust of the eyes, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The world we live in is a world ruled by Satan. Therefore, even now, Satan is constantly tempting the church, the children of God. The reason is that although we live in a world ruled by Satan, we are a church under the control of God. We who believe in Jesus have already been delivered from the kingdom of Satan and entered the kingdom of God. And the kingdom of God is ruled by God. Now that we are living in the kingdom of God ruled by this God, we must first live a life that seeks the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mt. 6:33). We should never live like the people of the world ruled by Satan, worrying about what we will eat, what we will drink, and what we will wear. We must watch and pray to Heavenly Father that we will not fall into Satan's temptations (26:41). We must ask our Heavenly Father to deliver us here and now from Satan's sin and the reign of death. And with longing for God's rule, we must ask Heavenly Father for the kingdom of God to be completed quickly (Kim).

Fourth and last, what we need to think about in the Lord's Prayer is the doxology.

Look at the second half of Matthew 6:13 in today's text: "... For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." This last part of the Lord's Prayer, as taught by Jesus, is what we usually refer to as the doxology. What is the doxology? The doxology literally means a song to be sung by memorization, and it is mainly a prayer-type ode to the beginning or end of a worship service (Kim). The literal meaning of this doxology is 'For the kingdom and the power and the glory are Yours' (Kim). Here, the conjunction “for” explains the reason for the prayer “And do not lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” in the first half of verse 13. In other words, the reason why we pray “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil” is because the kingdom and the power and the glory belong to God the Father. Regarding this doxology, there is a Bible verse that can help us understand. That is 2 Timothy 4:17-18: “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” Verse 18 says, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom.” Isn't this similar to the last part of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:13 in today's text? The reason we pray, “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever,” is because God the Father has already delivered us to the kingdom of Satan and enable us to enter the kingdom of heaven through

the death and resurrection of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ on the cross. Therefore, we sing the kingdom of God, the power of God, and the glory of God.

Let's all get up and sing the Lord's Prayer that the Lord taught us, Korean Hymn 635: "Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil; For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

Let us store up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

[Matthew 6:19-24]

Do you have any fears? If yes, what fears do you have? According to Deuteronomy 8:17, Moses, the great leader of Israel, was afraid. The fear was that the Israelites would say in their hearts, “My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.” Obviously, according to Deuteronomy 8:18, Moses was afraid that the Israelites might say that they obtained wealth by means of their own power and strength, even though God had given them the ability to obtain wealth. In a word, Moses was afraid that the Israelites would become proud and forget God (v. 14). When were the Israelites in danger of becoming proud? It was when all they had was abundant (v. 13). In other words, the Israelites went into Canaan, a land in which they lacked nothing (v. 9), a good land (v. 7), and ate and was satisfied (vv. 10, 12), built and lived in good houses (v. 12), their cattle multiplied, their silver and gold were multiplied and all they had multiplied (v. 13), the Israelites could become proud. Moses was afraid of this. We should be afraid too. We too should fear that we will become proud. We should be afraid that we may become satisfied and proud and forget God without knowing it. In particular, those of us who live in this affluent American land where there seems to be no shortage should be afraid of becoming satisfied and proud. We need to be on the lookout for obesity in our hearts. We must beware that our hearts may become obese without our knowledge and become slaves to greed and covetousness.

In today's text, Matthew 6:20, Jesus tells us, “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.” Focusing on this word today, under the title of “Let us store up for ourselves treasures in heaven,” I hope and pray that we can receive the lessons that God gives us by thinking about the three lessons and obey them.

First, the lesson that the words “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” teach us is not to store up treasures on earth.

Look at Matthew 6:19 – “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.” What does it mean to store up treasures on earth? In Luke 12:16-21, there is

a parable about a rich man who stored up treasures on the earth. This rich man is troubled in his heart because his field is plentiful. The trouble was, “What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?” (Lk. 12:17) What he chose in his troubles was to tear down his barns and build larger ones (v. 18). The rich man made the barns larger and stored all his grain and goods there (v. 18). After he had put up a lot of goods for many years, he wanted to rest, eat, drink, and be merry (v. 19). This is what God said to this rich man: “You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?” (v. 20) And this is what Jesus said: “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (v. 21). In this parable of Jesus, when we say that we store up treasures on earth, it means that when the riches that the people of this world consider as treasures increase, they tear down their barns and store them up on this earth even if they become larger. The first thing we need to think about here is the riches that people of this world consider as treasures. What are these riches? These riches refer to wealth or property or possessions (Walvoord). It could be money or, in modern terms, real estate (buildings). Then, in today's text, Matthew 6:19, when we say that we store up treasures on earth, it means that we store up wealth on earth. For example, when we have a lot of money, like a rich man in the parable of Jesus who breaks down his barns and builds the bigger ones, we open several bank accounts and accumulate that much money in those account is storing up treasures on the earth. However, there is a question we need to consider seriously when we are storing up wealth on this earth for ourselves in this way. I thought of it in 2 ways: (1) The first question is, if God takes me tonight, whose wealth will I have prepared so far? As I asked this question, I was reminded of the words of Ecclesiastes 5. Those words are the grievous evil that King Solomon saw in this world, that is, the owner keeps his wealth from harm to himself (v. 13). But in the end, he can't enjoy his wealth properly, and he loses it all due to disasters and there is no wealth to give to his sons (vv. 14-16). The essence of this Ecclesiastes chapter 5 messages is that God is a God who enables us to enjoy the riches and wealth that God has given us. Can you imagine the end result if God blessed us with riches and wealth, but we did not receive the blessing to enjoy them? (2) The second question is, am I really rich toward God? Clearly, Jesus told the parable of the rich man in Luke 12, saying, “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (v. 21). If we have all the riches we have laid up on this earth, what good is it if we die tonight? Should we not be rich toward God, not rich toward this world?

The Pharisees, the religious leaders of Jesus' day, believed that the Lord blesses those whom He loves materially (Walvoord). And in reality our God is the God who gives us riches and wealth. But God never gives those riches and wealth to those who love silver (Eccl. 5:10), that is, to those who love money. Even if it is given, it is not a blessing but a curse (punishment). How can riches and wealth be a curse (punishment) to those who love money? One of those punishments is the belly of greed. If a person who loves money has more money, eventually the money will make him greedier, and he will have no choice but to live without satisfaction. This is the punishment. This is a great curse to have a belly of greed without satisfaction. There is never peace in the heart of the lover of money who owns a belly of unsatisfied greed. God does not give riches and wealth to those who love money, but to those who love God, that is, to those who fear God and keep His commandments (Ref.: Ps. 112:1-3).

But the problem with the Pharisees in Jesus' day was the fact that their eyes were clear. Look at today's text Matthew 6:22-23: "The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" What does it mean? It means that the Pharisees at the time of Jesus had their spiritual eyes darkened and lusted for wealth (greediness), so they stored up their wealth on this earth. So this is what Jesus said about the Pharisees in Luke 16:14 – "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him." We must not be lovers of money like the Pharisees. We must not love money. Look at 1 Timothy 6:10 – "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." Why can't we love money? The reason is because the love of money is the root of all evil. If we covet money because we love it, we will be deceived and depart from the faith. We have to keep in mind that those who want to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, leading to ruin and destruction (v. 9). So we shouldn't love money. Also, we must not store up money on this earth. Why? This is because, as Jesus said in the second half of Matthew 6:19, moth and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal. What does it mean? It means that if we store up money or wealth on this earth, it is one of the two. Either all that money or wealth is lost or stolen by thieves (MacDonald). In a word, the reason why we shouldn't accumulate money or wealth on this earth is because it will all disappear. So the Apostle James said in James 5:2-3: "Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!" We must not store up our treasure on this earth in these last days.

Second, the lesson that the words "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" teach us is that we should live with eternal values, serving the eternal God for eternal things.

Look at Matthew 6:20 – "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal." What do you think Jesus meant by saying that we should store up for ourselves treasures in heaven? How can we store up treasures in heaven? As I pondered this question, I was reminded of a conversation between Jesus and a rich man in Mark 10:17-22. When this rich man ran to Jesus, knelt before Him and asked Him what he must do to inherit eternal life (v. 17), Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone" (v. 17). Then, Jesus told him the commandments: "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother" (v. 19). At that time, the rich man answered Jesus, "I have kept these things from my youth up" (v. 20). Then looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him: "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (v. 21). When Jesus saw one thing he lacks, He said to him, "Go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (v. 21). Here we can learn from the words of Jesus how to store up treasure in heaven. Dr. Yoon-sun Park summarized the method as follows: 'The way I have stored up treasures in heaven is by sacrificing all my good things on earth (not only material things,

but also effort and talents and everything else) for the Lord' (Park). In fact, Jesus also said this in Luke 12:33-34: "Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What is Jesus talking about? What Jesus is telling us is to give alms. This is what it means to store up treasures in heaven, and those treasures never run out. Regarding the word to give alms, Jesus said this in Matthew 6:2-4: "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." When we give alms, we must do it in secret. Then God our Father, who sees in secret, will reward us. Then why should we store up treasures in heaven? Jesus is telling us the reason in Matthew 6:21 – "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." In other words, the reason we should store up our treasures in heaven is because only then will our hearts be turned to God (Park). Matthew 6:21 begins with the word "For" and this conjunction tells the reason for verse 20, "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" In other words, the reason we should store up our treasures in heaven is because when we do so, our hearts can be in heaven. In other words, the reason we should store up our treasures in heaven is so that our hearts always can be with God our Father, who is in the eternal heaven. Do our hearts really be with God our Father who is in heaven right now?

In order to follow Jesus, we must deny ourselves, take up our own crosses, and follow Jesus (16:24). No matter what hardships and sacrifices there may be in giving up our own will and obeying the Lord's will, we must sacrifice for it. That sacrifice is sacrificing for the Lord. Then, what does sacrificing for the Lord really mean? A good example is Moses the man of faith in Hebrews 11:24-26: "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward." By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. And he chose to suffer with God's people then to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. He also valued being reproached for Christ's sake more valuable than all the treasures of Egypt. How was Moses able to do this? It was because by faith he looked forward to the reward he would receive. Moses had eternal values. As the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he knew that it would be temporary to have all the treasures of Egypt and enjoy the pleasures of iniquity. At the same time, he knew that his reward for standing before the Lord was eternal. Therefore, with eternal values, he rejected and sparingly gave up momentary things in this world for the sake of eternal things. I remember the word of missionary Jim Elliott, who was martyred with four other missionaries at the young age of 29, when he was a college student, for preaching the gospel to the cruel Auca (Wadani) living in Ecuador, South America: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

Third and last, the lesson that the words "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" teach us is that we cannot serve both God and wealth.

Look at Matthew 6:24 – “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other You cannot serve God and wealth.” Can “one” (v. 24) or a “servant” (Lk. 16:13) serve two masters? Jesus said that a servant cannot serve two masters. The reason is because if he loves one, then he will hate the other. And the reason is because if he is devoted to one, then he will despise the other. Therefore, we must serve only one master. But for some reason, those who believe in Jesus seem to be serving both God and money (Mt. 6:24). This is syncretism. If it is God, then we should serve God. And if it is money, we should serve wealth. But we are serving both God and money. Maybe we are serving God for riches. This idolatry of materiality eventually makes us slaves to material things, making us live everything for material things. Even if we study, we do it for the material. And if we work, we do it for the material. Even the religious life is for material things. So, we like to ask God for material blessings even when we pray. And even if we receive prayer of blessings from the pastors, we really like to receive material blessings from God. Both our lips and our ears long for material blessings. And our hands and feet are busy pursuing material blessings. The reason is because our hearts are in matter or wealth. It reminds me of the words of Jesus: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt. 6:21). Our hearts have been stolen from the worldly treasures. We are addicted to the treasures of this world.

We must be afraid. We must be afraid of the love of money (1 Tim. 6:10). We should be afraid of material blessings. Therefore, we should not ask God for material blessings in vain. The reason is because after receiving the blessing of material things, our hearts become arrogant, and our hearts turn away from God our Father who is in heaven and no longer depend on God but depend on our material possessions, committing sin of idolizing our material possessions and serving them. Therefore, before seeking material blessings, we must frequently check ourselves before God to make sure that our hearts are always directed only to our Heavenly Father. And we must first learn the secret of being content with the Lord alone, who is the source of the blessings rather than material blessings. In doing so, God will give us material blessings when we live by sacrificing our material things for the eternal Lord. Then we will never serve both God and material things. We will use the material things He has given us for His glory, serving only the Lord.

This is what the Bible Proverbs 15:6 says: “Great wealth is in the house of the righteous, But trouble is in the income of the wicked.” The Bible clearly says that the income of the wicked is trouble. If our hearts are not with our Father in heaven, but only to the material blessings God has given us, our hearts will become proud and we will have no choice but to serve God and Money. If God takes away our money at that time, it is rather a blessing. However, if God does not take the money away and rather our income increases, it will be trouble and pain to us, not a blessing. The reason is because our income will eventually fuel the pride and greed of our hearts to the point of committing the sin of idolizing money. I hope and pray, as Jesus taught us, that we all store up for ourselves treasures in heaven, so that our hearts are only with our heavenly Father and that we can use the material blessings God has given us only for the glory of God. Therefore, I hope and pray that you and I will be able to please our Father who is in heaven.

Let us not worry about tomorrow.

[Matthew 6:25-34]

Do you know what will happen tomorrow? We can find the answer to this question in James 4:13-15: “Come now, you who say, “‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’” The Bible clearly says we don’t know what our life will be like tomorrow. Therefore, Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.” We don’t know what will happen not only tomorrow but also today. Therefore, the Bible tells us not to boast about tomorrow. Also, the Bible says not to worry about tomorrow (Mt. 6:34). Still, aren’t we worried about tomorrow? In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus is saying not to worry several times. In particular, Jesus says in verse 34: “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Today, I want to meditate on the three things under the heading "Do not worry about tomorrow."

First, what should we not be worry about?

In today's text Matthew 6:34, the Bible tells us that we should not worry about tomorrow. Here, what does Jesus refer to when He said “So do not worry about tomorrow”? Look at verses 25 and 31: “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'" What Jesus was referring to was that we should not worry about what we will eat, what we will drink and what we will put on (Lk. 12:29). In other words, Jesus is telling us not to worry about the needs of everyday life. Jesus is saying that “the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things” (v. 32). In other words, Jesus is saying that unbelievers are asking for these things because they are concerned about their daily needs such as food, drink, and clothes. Maybe we claim to have faith but like unbelievers we worry about these things as well.

In this world, there is a lot of worry. I cannot help but agree with what Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:32-33: “But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.” Also, when we do God’s work, we are like Martha in Luke 10:41, we are worried and bothered about so many things. This reminds me the hymn “My Soul in Sad Exile”: “My soul in sad exile was out on life’s sea, So burdened with sin and distressed ...” (Internet). What should we do in this world full of distress and worries? The Bible Luke 21:34 tells us to be careful. What should we careful? The Bible says we should be careful not to let our mind be dulled by the dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life (Lk. 21:34). If there are worries of life, our hearts will get dull. And when our hearts are dull, we are bound to lose spiritual sensitivity. As a result, we won’t be able to live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit because we don’t understand it. So we will live according to our sinful nature. In the parable of the seeds in Matthew 13:22, Jesus says that the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. Isn’t this true? Among the worries of our live, especially when we are under financial pressure, we are more prone to be tempted by wealth. If we have the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth, then we cannot hear God’s voice even though we read the Bible and hear and study the Word of God. As a result, we will live a fruitless life of faith. Therefore, we should not worry about tomorrow, as Jesus said.

Second, why shouldn’t we worry about tomorrow?

In today's text Matthew 6:24-34, Jesus is telling us three reasons:

(1) The first reason is that life is more important than food or clothing.

Look at Matthew 6:25 – “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” In general, I think it is normal for us to worry about what to eat, what to drink or what to wear for our own lives. This is because our people are eager to survive. But those of us with faith should think biblically rather than think generally. Biblical thinking is that we don’t have to worry about what we eat or drink or what we wear for our lives because our Heavenly Father knows that we need all these things (v. 32). Moreover, since our Heavenly Father gave us eternal life in Jesus Christ, will He not give us the daily necessities to us? I think this is what Jesus meant by life is more important than food or clothing (v. 25). God has given even His begotten Son Jesus to the cross for our salvation (eternal life). “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32) Wouldn’t Heavenly Father provide us with the daily bread we need?

Wouldn't Heavenly Father who loves us and even gave His begotten Son on the cross for our salvation give something for us to wear? Our Heavenly Father, who gave us eternal life, is God who knows what we need and has no difficulty in providing to us.

(2) The second reason is that our Heavenly Father knows that we need all these things.

Look at Matthew 6:32 – “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” According to Psalms 139, our God is the God who made us (v. 14) and who knows us (v. 1). He knows when we sit down and when we rise up. He understands our thoughts from afar (v. 2). He is intimately acquainted with all our ways (v. 3) and even before there is a word on our tongue, He knows it all (v. 4). The amazing truth is that God's precious thoughts to us are outnumbered the sand (vv. 17-18). Why does God have such vast thoughts toward us? It is because God who knows us the best loves us the most. Don't you think God who knows us the best and who loves us the most knows what we need in our everyday lives? Will your Heavenly Father not know the food and drink we need and the clothes we need to wear?

(3) The third reason is that each day has enough trouble of its own.

Look at Matthew 6:34 – “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” When I was meditating on this word, the Korean gospel song “I don't know about tomorrow” came into my mind: “I don't know about tomorrow, I just live from day to day. I don't borrow from its sunshine, For its skies may turn to gray. I don't worry o'er the future, For I know what Jesus said, And today I'll walk beside Him, For He knows what is ahead” (Internet). This song is written by Mrs. Hee-sook Ahn. I still remember reading her book ‘If I perish, I perish.’ As I was meditating on this word, I came to know the story which I didn't know about her before. The story is that she was scheduled for execution on August 18, 1945. The reason is that when Elder Park Gwan-jun and his son were calling out "Jehovah God's Great Mission" in the Capitol of Japan and threw a warning that ‘Japan would be ruined by sulfur' three guards ran to Elder Park and his son and capture them. Then a security guard asked Mrs. Ahn ‘Are you one of these people?’, she said ‘yes’. So she was arrested as well. And she was transferred to Pyongyang prison and imprisoned for 6 years. It was said that the execution was scheduled on the morning of August 18, 1945. However, on August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered to the atomic bomb of the United States and Korea was liberated, and on August 17, the day before the execution, Mrs. Hee-sook Ahn was released (internet). Isn't this surprising? Isn't it surprising that she was rescued a day before her execution? That was why she wrote this song: “I don't know about tomorrow” came into my mind: “I don't know about tomorrow, I just live from day to day. I don't borrow from its sunshine, For its skies may turn to gray. I don't worry o'er the future, For I know what Jesus said, And today I'll walk beside Him, For He knows what is ahead.” We are walking on this rough path that the Lord had walked on.

There are times when it seems to be there is no end. And there are times when we get exhausted. But we must not worry about tomorrow because each day has enough trouble of its own as Jesus said. In fact, even if we are to be executed tomorrow, we should leave tomorrow to the Lord and not worry about it with the determination that if we perish we will perish. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Lastly, what should we do to not to worry about tomorrow?

When Jesus said not to worry, He gave us two examples: the first is the birds of the air (vv. 26-27) and the second is the lilies of the field (vv. 28-30). Consider the first example. Look at Matthew 6:26-27: “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?” When we consider the birds of the air, they don’t sow, nor reap nor gather into barns like us. Can they farm like us? Of course, the answer is no. If the heavenly Father feeds the birds that can’t farm, will He not feed us and take care of us who are formed in the image of God and who are more precious than those birds? In addition to this, what we should think about is who among us can add a single inch to our height by worrying? (v. 27) Here, the word “height” doesn’t only refer to our physical height but also “the length of life” (Swanson). I thought of the word "height" primarily as the length of the body, but I think it is reasonable to interpret it as "the length of life". The reason is that when we think about what Jesus said, “Is not life more than food ...” (v. 25), I think Jesus is telling us that not only can we not be able to grow the body by worrying about it but also we can’t extend our lives one more hour. So Jesus said “And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?” (v. 27). Can we extend our life for an hour by worrying about it? Isn’t it worse for our health? Think about how the lilies of the field grow (v. 28). They don’t toil nor do they spin (v. 28). Nevertheless, Jesus said that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these (v. 29). “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you?” (v. 30) To those who are worried about what to eat or what to wear, Jesus is saying “You of little faith!” (v. 30). That’s why we should look at the birds of the air (v. 26). And we should observe how the lilies of the field grow (v. 28). We are more precious than them. We are those who are bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Bible says that God honors us (Isa. 43:4). If God feeds and clothe the birds of the air and the lilies of the earth, will He not feed us and clothe us? Therefore, when we are worry about tomorrow, as Jesus said, we should look at the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. When we do, we will not be worry about tomorrow.

We must first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness in order not to worry about tomorrow. In other words, we must seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God, rather than worrying and seeking for what to eat, what to drink or what to wear, like unbelievers. If our priority is food, clothing and shelter, then we will worry all the days of our lives. But if our priority is His kingdom and His righteousness, then we will experience God's provision of our food, clothing and shelter. This is what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 – “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” By believing in this Word of Jesus, let

us seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness first. As we pray in faith "Give us this day our daily bread" (v. 11), let us all seek first the kingdom of God and live according to God's will (Park Yun-sun). In doing so, God will fill our daily needs with our food, drink and clothing. May we be able to experience this grace.

This is what the Bible says in 1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" and in Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." God is telling us not to be anxious about anything. He is telling us not to worry. Therefore, we should not worry about tomorrow. We should not worry about tomorrow what to eat or what to drink or what to wear. Our Heavenly Father knows that we need all of these things. God, who gave us the most important thing to us, that is salvation, eternal life, by giving His only Son Jesus on the cross, will give us all of these things. Therefore, let us first and foremost seek God's kingdom and live according to His will for His glory.

Let us not criticize.

[Matthew 7:1-6]

Do you think trust in Korean Christians is gradually declining? If so, why do you think the Korean church is being criticized? On November 16, 2012, at the Reformation Forum (theme: 'Is it possible for a second Reformation?') held at the Korean Association of Christian Professors, the most fundamental reason why the Korean church is receiving social criticism is said to be as follows: Because of the separated lives and beliefs of Christians.' Professor In-cheol Han of Yonsei University pointed out that the biggest problem of Korean Protestantism is the 'separation of faith and life', and pointed out that Korean Christians believe in Jesus, but they do not need to live like Jesus. He also pointed out that the most fundamental reason Christians cannot reproduce the life of Jesus is because they believe in Jesus, but do not want to live like Jesus. In other words, his point is that even though we, Christians, believe in Jesus and be saved and go to heaven, we are being criticized by the world because we do not want to live like Jesus (Internet). What do you think? Why do you think we Christians are being criticized?

In today's text, Matthew 7:1, Jesus says, "Do not judge and criticize and condemn others, so that you may not be judged and criticized and condemned"(AMPC). I would like to meditate on today's text under the title "Let us not criticize" focusing on this verse today. I hope and pray that you and I will be obedient by receiving the three lessons God gives us.

First, we must not criticize.

Look at Matthew 7:1 – "Do not judge and criticize and condemn others, so that you may not be judged and criticized and condemned"(AMPC). Do you know the difference between "criticism" and "judgment"? Looking at the Internet Naver dictionary, the word "criticism" is defined like this: 'To judge or clarify the right or wrong of things.' And there are synonyms 'criticism, judgment, critique' (Internet). And while the word "judgment" is defined as 'the work of deliberation on a problematic case and making a judgment,' in Christianity, the word "judgment" is defined as 'God punishes the sins of man and the world or something like that' (Internet). The reason I looked up the definitions of these two words is to understand in more detail the meaning of Jesus' words, "Do not

judge and criticize and condemn others ...” in today’s text. In today’s text, Matthew 7:1, when Jesus said, “Do not judge and criticize and condemn others,” that “judge” does not mean that we should not “criticize” in the Naver dictionary, that is, ‘judging or revealing things according to whether they are or not.’ Also, Jesus’ words “Do not judge and criticize and condemn” do not forbid character criticism related to hiring a person, nor does it forbid criticism of a person who is in good faith valid (not slander). What Jesus forbids here, like the Pharisees, is to become a judge and criticize or condemn others (Internet). In fact, the word ‘judge, criticize or condemn’ in today’s text is the original Greek word “krinete” (κρίνετε), which means “to judge” (Internet). In other words, Jesus said, “Do not judge and criticize and condemn others, so that you may not be judged and criticized and condemned.” Why did Jesus forbid judgment? The reason is because judgment and condemnation can only be done by God. In other words, since God is the only judge, we should not sit in God’s seat and judge others. So the Apostle James says in James 4:11-12: “Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor”

Who are we to judge our neighbors? Who are we to judge our neighbors? One interesting thing here is that the Apostle James says: “He that slanders his brother, or judges his brother, blasphemes the law and judges the law” (v. 11). That is, James uses the words “slander” and “judge” in the same context. It means that we should not sit in the judge’s seat and judge our neighbors, nor should we slander. Here, the phrase “do not slander each other” is interpreted in the Naver dictionary’s meaning as ‘do not mock at each other or speak slander’ (Internet). When interpreted in its original Greek meaning, it means ‘do not condemn each other personally’ or ‘find fault with each other’ (Friberg). But the problem is that in the church, we Christians are violating this word and finding faults with each other and condemning each other. In other words, now we are sitting in the judge’s seat judging our neighbors. This was the case with the Roman Church at the time of the Apostle Paul. So Paul said to the Roman church members in Romans 2:1-3: “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment?” Why did the Roman church members judge each other? Why did the Jewish saints condemn their Gentile brothers? The reason was because the Jewish believers had a sense of spiritual superiority. In other words, because they were proud, they judged and condemned the Gentile brothers. And they were so proud that they did not know that they were doing the same thing. Therefore, they mistakenly thought that they could escape God’s judgment. Have you ever actually experienced something like this? Have I ever realized that after seeing the behavior of the other person, I judged and condemned him in my heart, and later, I myself did the same or at least a similar thing to that person? This seems to be what we are. We compare ourselves with other brothers and sisters in Christ, mistakenly believe that we are better than others, and have a sense of spiritual superiority. Why are we doing that? The reason is because we are proud. Therefore, we must guard against pride. We need to be very wary of the feeling of spiritual

superiority in our hearts. In particular, we must be very wary of replacing the consciousness of grace with a consciousness of privilege and merit in our hearts. Otherwise, we too, like the Roman church members, will commit the sin of judging and condemning one another against God.

Why should we not judge and condemn one another? Why shouldn't we criticize each other? This is why Jesus is telling us in today's text, Matthew 7:2: "For just as you judge and criticize and condemn others, you will be judged and criticized and condemned, and in accordance with the measure you [use to] deal out to others, it will be dealt out again to you" (AMPC). The reason we should not criticize one another is that we may not be criticized for it (v. 2). In a nutshell, we must not criticize in order that we may not be criticized (v. 1). We must not judge (condemn) our neighbors in order that we may not be judged (condemned). We must not weigh our neighbors, lest we be weighed (v. 2). Personally, as I meditated on today's text Matthew 7:1, I was reminded of what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:3-4: "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me." Paul considered it very little to be judged by the Corinthians or by others. In other words, Paul didn't care much about the judgment of believers or unbelievers. Even more surprising, Paul did not judge himself. What do you think? Do you understand? How could Paul not care so much about the judgments of others? How could he not have judged himself? Doesn't Paul's word sound arrogant for some reason? Paul was able to do this because he knew that it was the Lord who could only judge him. In other words, Paul did not have himself or others sit in the judge's seat, but rather the Lord who should have been seated in his seat. So he didn't care too much about others' judgment and he didn't judge himself either. What should we do? Look at Luke 6:37 – "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." We must not criticize. We must not condemn. We must forgive each other. And we must listen to Romans 14:10 – "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat."

Second, we must get rid of hypocrisy.

Look at Matthew 7:5 – "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Who is hypocrite? We think that a hypocrite is a different person from the outside. And a hypocrite is different from the outside, and he focuses on the outside more than the inside. So, although the outward appearance of the hypocrite may be pleasing to people, his inner man has sinful appearances that are not worthy in the sight of God. A more biblical expression of this hypocritical Christian is one who has the appearance of godliness but denies the power of godliness (2 Tim.3:5). In the Old Testament, the hypocrites refer to people who say that there is no God or who do not believe in God (Job 8:13; 15:34-35; 17:8; Isa. 9:17; 33:14). And the hypocrites completely oppose God, saying there is no God. In the New Testament, it is particularly well shown in the teachings of Jesus. They hypocrites pray for their own purpose rather than God's will. And the hypocrites want people's praise (Jesus said in Matthew 6:2, the hypocrite seeks to be glorified by men).

These hypocrites judge the sins of others, ignoring their own faults (Mt. 7:1-5). Then who were the typical hypocrites at the time of Jesus? It was the Pharisees who were the religious leaders. In fact, Jesus often called the Pharisees hypocrites. The reason was because there was a contradiction between their outward and inward attitudes (15:1-9). I think Matthew 23 is the chapter where the most mention of hypocrites is. Religious leaders like the Pharisees in Jesus' day did not do what they preached (23:3). So Jesus compared them to whitewashed tombs that are dirty on the inside but pretend to be clean on the inside (23:25-28) (Internet). But the question is, were there really such hypocrites only at the time of Jesus? Aren't there many hypocrites even in this age? Could it be that we are not the hypocrites Jesus is talking about? In particular, as Jesus said in Matthew 7:1-6, aren't we ignoring our own shortcomings while judging (condemning) the sins of others? While we cannot see our own great faults or sins, we must not condemn those whom we see the smallest faults or sins of other brothers in the church. If we are committing this sin now, Jesus is saying this in today's text in Matthew 7:3-4: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?" Here, "the speck" that Jesus is talking about refers to a speck of sawdust or a piece of wood or broken glass. How small is the speck of sawdust, the piece of wood or the piece of broken glass? But the amazing thing is that the hypocrite sees the speck in his brother's eye. How is this possible? How can the hypocrites see the small flaws of his brother? The reason is because the hypocrite does not see his own plank before God and His holy Word. In other words, the hypocrite does not see his own great flaws, so he sees the smallest flaws in others.

If we can see the faults of other brothers and sisters in the church, it is proof that we are not seeing our own faults to that extent. And if we actually say that we know our own shortcomings, but criticize the other's brothers and sisters enough to ignore them in our hearts, then we are being hypocritical. If we are being hypocritical now, we would be conscious of the people of the church, pretending to be clean and holy in our outward appearance, but our hearts would not actually be so clean and holy. In doing so, we will try to tell our other brothers and sisters that we must be clean and holy and teach them to live that way. A good example of hypocrisy is found in Galatians 2:11-14. Immediately, Peter was being hypocritical in front of the Gentiles and withdrew from them (v. 12), for fear of some Jewish circumcision who had come from James of the church in Jerusalem. When the Apostle Paul saw this, he faced Peter and rebuked him (v. 11). Why did Paul rebuke Peter? The reason was because Peter's hypocrisy was not to walk rightly according to the truth of the gospel (v. 14). Paul rebuked Peter in front of all: "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" What does it mean? Paul rebuked Peter, a true Jew who was justified through faith in Jesus Christ alone (v. 16), for acting as a "Gentile sinner" (v. 15), because he wanted to be justified by works of the law (v. 15). In particular, Paul rebuked Peter for not living like a true Jew (Christian), but how he tried to make Gentile sinners live like a true Jew (Christian). I applied this rebuke to us like this: 'When you, as Christians, have been saved by believing in Jesus Christ only by the grace of God, why do you want to forsake that sense of grace and have a sense of merit to gain salvation by your works? Are you living like the Pharisees?' If our Christian life focuses on our own good deeds or acts of service, not 'by the grace of God alone', and records those good deeds in our hearts, then we are being

hypocritical. As a result, we will seek our own glory rather than the glory of God. And the gap between our inner man and our outer man will widen. So the form of godliness may look good to people, but our hearts and our inner man are more and more distant from God. Thus, we will be sinning against God. And yet, our conscience is sealed (1 Tim. 4:2) that we feel no remorse, and will continue to live our familiar religious and hypocritical lives. What should we do? We must listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 23:25-26: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.” We must first clean our insides. We must first remove the plank in our eye (7:5). We must first examine ourselves with the Holy Word of God. We must diligently reflect our minds in that spiritual mirror. And when God exposes our sins with His holy Word and pierces our conscience, we must confess our sins to God and repent by relying on the power of the blood shed on the cross of Jesus. Then, like hypocrites, we only respect God with our lips, and our hearts can not be far from God (Mk. 7:6). And like hypocrites, we will not give alms or service to others in order to gain their glory. We will no longer try to appear to people as righteous (Mt. 23:28).

Third and final, we must make judgments.

Look at Matthew 7:6 – “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.” In today's text, Matthew 7:1, when Jesus said, “Do not judge and criticize and condemn others”, it does not mean that you should not judge at all. Although we should not judge, criticize or condemn others as a judge according to Jesus' words, we must make the right judgment. Here, right judgment is not judging by appearance, as John 7:24 says, but judging righteously. And to judge justly is to discern between good and evil. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:15 that “The spiritual man makes judgments about all things.” Therefore, as spiritual people, we must judge all things, especially we must discern spiritual things (v. 13). We must listen to what the Apostle John says in 1 John 4:1 – “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” We must be discerning. We must discern whether the spirits are of God. The reason is because many false prophets have come out of this world. Also, the spiritual thing we need to discern spiritually is to distinguish what is from God (v. 14) and what is from this world (v. 12). For example, in 1 John 2:16-17, the Bible says: “For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” Clearly the Bible says that the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life do not come from God the Father, but from this world. Another example is that we must discern the wisdom that comes down from heaven in James 3 and the wisdom that comes from the earth (Jam. 3:15). The wisdom from this earth is to boast and to deny the truth when we harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in our hearts (v. 14). But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (v. 17). We must distinguish between the holy and the profane, between the unclean and the clean (Lev. 10:10).

In today's text, Matthew 7:6, Jesus says, "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs." What does it mean? As God's holy people, we must not give holy things to dogs or pigs. Dogs and pigs here are unclean animals according to the Mosaic Law, and in today's text they refer to the wicked (MacDonald). And the wicked don't value what we have to advise them (Keener). Look at the Bible Proverbs 11:22 – "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion." Can you imagine a gold ring on a pig's nose? Does it suit? Do pigs value gold rings? Of course not. Pigs do not value gold rings. Now Jesus is telling us not to give to the wicked who do not value what is holy. So what is "sacred" that Jesus is talking about here? In the Old Testament, there are many references to "sacred". In those words, "a sacred anointing oil" (Exod. 30:25), "a sacred assembly" (Lev. 23:7, 35; Deut. 28:18, 25), "the sacred linen tunic" (Lev. 16:4), "the sacred diadem" (Exod. 29:6), "sacred garments" (Exod. 28:2), 'the sacred stones' (Exod. 34:13), etc. However, in the New Testament, 2 Peter 2:21 says, "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them." Considering this word, I think that the "sacred" that Jesus is talking about in Matthew 7:6 seems to be "the sacred commands". In other words, I think Jesus was saying not to give the holy command or the holy word to the wicked who do not value it. The basis for my thinking is in Acts 13:46-48: "Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: 'We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." Paul and Barnabas first preached the word of God to the Jews. But they turned to the Gentiles because they rejected the holy word and considered themselves unworthy of eternal life. But those Gentiles heard the holy word of God and rejoiced, praising God's word, and all those who God decided to give them eternal life believed in Jesus. In the same way, like Paul and Barnabas, we must judge wisely and not give the holy word to the wicked who do not value it and reject it. But we must turn around and preach the gospel to those who value it, hear it and rejoice in it. But the problem is that we Christians are losing judgment (discerning) now (Deut. 32:28). How can we know this? As an example, we can see that the disputes that arise in the church are taken to the world court. Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 6:5 – "I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?" To say that there is not one among us so wise to judge the strife between brothers is evidence that we are losing our judgment now. When I think about what the cause is because we do not value the holy word of God like "dogs" and "pigs" as Jesus said in Matthew 7:6. Therefore, we are losing our spiritual judgment because we do not delight in hearing the word of God and do not meditate on it day and night. As a result, we are becoming more and more hypocrites (v. 5).

What should we do? First, we must love the holy word of God. Therefore, we should delight in hearing the holy word of God. And we must meditate on that word day and night. We should also pray to God to give us His judgment as the psalmist prayed to God: "We should also pray to God to give us His judgment as the psalmist prayed to God" (Ps. 72:1). Therefore, we must judge for ourselves what is right with the wisdom and judgment that God gives us (Lk. 12:57).

Now, we Christians are being criticized a lot by the people of the world. Now the world is condemning us Christians. Why are we being criticized by the world right now? The reason is because we Christians are hypocrites. Since we are hypocrites, we are being criticized by the world. Now we are condemning not seeing the log in our own eyes, but seeing the speck in the eyes of the world. And now we Christians are trying to get the specks out of the eyes of the world. Therefore, the people of the world who see our hypocrisy are saying to us Christians, 'You are hypocrites. You should do well.' What should we do? We must face our hypocrisy with the right judgment that God gives us. And we must admit and confess our hypocrisy, repent and throw it away (1 Pet. 2:1). We no longer have to honor God with our lips. We must respect God with all our hearts (refer to Mk. 7:6). Therefore, we no longer need to look like Christians only on the outside. But we must live as disciples of Jesus who are truly in harmony with the outside. We must not only believe in Jesus, but also become truthful Christians who live like Jesus. Then we will no longer be criticized by the world. Rather, they will truly call us "Christians" (Acts 11:26). Therefore, I hope and pray in the name of Jesus that we all can glorify the Lord.

Let's pray.

[Matthew 7:7-11]

When we think about prayer we Christians often talk about Pastor George Mueller, who was called a man of prayer or a warrior of prayer. The reason is because he is known for receiving the most answers to prayers in history. He is said to have received answered prayers more than 50,000 prayers. As I was preparing for this sermon, I learned about Pastor George Muller's six lifelong prayer tips and shared them with you (Internet): (1) Trust in Jesus! Pray on the merits of Jesus, not on your merits. (2) Forsake sin! If we pray with sin, God will not hear our prayers. Forsake the sin hidden in your heart (Ps. 66:18). (3) Believe! We must believe in the word of promise that God has sworn and pray (Heb. 11:6). (4) Pray with patience! The attitude of a prayer is firstly patience, secondly patience, and thirdly, patience. As a farmer waits patiently for the harvest, so the one who prays must wait (Jam. 5:7). (5) Study God's will and pray! Pray with a godly motive. We must not seek the gifts of God for selfish purposes (Jam. 4:3). Here are 6 attitudes to pray while discerning God's will: (1) Give up your will. (2) Don't trust your feelings. (3) Look to the Holy Spirit and the Word. (4) Consider your circumstances. (5) Pray for God's will to be revealed. Check that you are calm when making a decision. (6) If possible, pray at dawn! The people of prayer were the people of dawn. Hold on to the God who helps you at dawn (Ps. 46:5).

We have already meditated on the prayer Jesus taught in Matthew 6:5-13. First in verses 5-8 we learn three teachings about prayer: (1) The first lesson is that when we pray, we should not pray like hypocrites. (2) The second lesson is that when we pray, we should pray to our Heavenly Father who is in secret. (3) The third lesson is that when we pray, we should not be babbling like the Gentiles. Then Jesus taught the famous "The Lord's Prayer" in Matthew 6:9-13. The Lord's Prayer can be divided into four parts: (1) We must pray to our Father God in heaven. (2) There are three 'Your' petitions: (a) 'Hallowed be your name' (v. 9), (b) 'Your kingdom come' (v. 10), (c) 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (v. 10). (3) There are three 'us' petitions: (a) "Give us today our daily bread" (v. 11), (b) "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (v. 12), (c) "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (v. 13). (4) It is "doxology" (v. 13b).

In today's text, Matthew 7:7-11, we can see Jesus teaching about prayer again. We can summarize this teaching of Jesus' prayer in three ways (Willmington):

First, it is Jesus' command to prayer. The command is to keep praying earnestly to Heavenly Father.

Look at Matthew 7:7 – “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” The three verbs Jesus used here, “ask”, “seek” and “knock” are all imperatives of the present time. That is, Jesus commanded his disciples to keep asking, keep seeking, and keep knocking at the door. In other words, Jesus is commanding His disciples to continue to pray earnestly to Heavenly Father. So the question we can ask here is, for what do the disciples of Jesus keep praying earnestly to Heavenly Father? Some commentators say that the prayer that Jesus' disciples should continually ask for is to seek diligently the will of God (Willimington). Another commentator says that it is God's wisdom and guidance that they should earnestly pray to their Heavenly Father. The reason is that in verses 1-6, which is the closest context to today's text, Matthew 7:7-11, God's wisdom is desperately needed for God's guidance in order to fulfill Jesus' commands to not to criticize (condemn), to give up hypocrisy, and to judge (Wiersbe). I think both of these interpretations make sense. However, I think the interpretation of Word Biblical comments is more valid than these two commentators. The assertion of the interpretation of the commentary is that the prayer subject that Jesus' disciples should continue to earnestly seek from God the Father is the “good gifts” in verse 11 of today's text (Hagner). Look at Matthew 7:11 – “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” If this interpretation is correct, what are the “good gifts” that Jesus' disciples should continue to ask Heavenly Father for as Jesus commanded them? To answer this question we have to look at verse 13 of Luke 11:9-13, which is similar to today's text Matthew 7:7-11. This is Luke 11:13 – “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” The “good gifts” that Matthew spoke of, Luke said, is the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is the Holy Spirit that the disciples of Jesus had to keep earnestly asking Heavenly Father as Jesus commanded them. Then why did Jesus command his disciples to keep asking Heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit? The reason is because it was the earnest prayer of Jesus. Look at John 14:16 – “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--.” What does “another Counselor” mean here? The Greek word for the Counselor is *paraklhto*, originally derived from a legal term. In ancient courts, it was the custom of the accused to summon and stand by the accused's best friend when he was severely interrogated by the lawyer employed by the plaintiff and was put in an embarrassing position in which he could not defend himself. In this case, this friend becomes a 'parav-klhte' to the defendant. The Counselor, therefore, means a comforter who gives victory by risking his life to help the needy' (Internet). In John 14:16, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit ‘another Counselor’ (*ajllo paravklhto*), which contains profound allusion. The adjective ‘other’ of ‘other Counselor’, ‘ajllo’, means something else of the same kind and nature. In other words, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit is ‘another Counselor’ because the Holy Spirit whom Jesus will send has the same person and the same purpose as Jesus, and will work in Jesus’ name and in Jesus’ place (Internet). Jesus prayed for his disciples, asking God the Father to give them another Counselor, the Holy Spirit, so that he would be with them forever. The reason is because Jesus knew that He would have to leave them by dying on a cross, bearing all their sins. So Jesus said to his disciples, “But I tell

you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (16:7). The reason Jesus Himself asked God the Father to send the Counselor the Holy Spirit to his disciples was because he wanted the Holy Spirit to be with them forever, teaching them everything and reminding them of everything Jesus said to them (14:26). The reason Jesus asked God the Father to send the Holy Spirit was because when the Spirit of truth comes, He will testify of Him (15:26). And when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide them into all truth and will make known to them the things to come (16:13).

The good gifts we need to earnestly and continually ask our Heavenly Father is the Holy Spirit. Those who still do not believe in Jesus as their Savior (Eph. 2:8), please continue to earnestly seek God's gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8). When God gives you the gift of faith, you will not only be saved, but the Holy Spirit will dwell in you. And those of you who have already believed in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit dwells in you, please continue to ask God the Father for the filling of the Holy Spirit (Ref.: Eph. 5:18). This is because we must all be filled with the Holy Spirit and fully bear the fruit of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). In the midst of this, we must all be filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly preach the word of God like the early church members (Acts 4:31). Also, we must continue to ask our Heavenly Father for spiritual things that are in accordance with the will of the Holy Spirit and that He gives us (Internet). We know that our Heavenly Father is a good God, so He will give us the best things.

Second, it is our assurance in prayer. That assurance is the assurance of answer to our prayers.

Look at Matthew 7:8 – “For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” I still remember studying the Bible about the five assurances when I received discipleship from a pastor in college. One of those five assurances was ‘The assurance of answering prayers’ and the Bible verse of the assurance of answering prayers was John 16:24 – “Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” At that time, while receiving discipleship training, I memorized this Bible verse. But rather than having the assurance of answers to my prayers, I wanted to have the assurance of answering prayers. In particular, I wanted my joy to be complete as I received answers to my prayers from God as it was said, “Ask, and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.” But looking back now, I can’t remember the prayer topics that I asked God for at that time. And in conclusion, I have to confess that God, who is good, worked all things together for good out of all my shortcomings and always gave me good things. You too may have prayer topics in which you continue to earnestly pray to Heavenly Father. But, are you not discouraged when you think that your prayers are not answered even if you keep praying to God? If that is the case, please remember that Jesus spoke in parables starting from Luke 18:1 about always praying and not getting discouraged. A brief summary of Jesus' parable is as follows: In a certain town there was a judge who had no fear of God and who didn’t care about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the pleas, “Grant me justice against my adversary.” For some time he refused. But finally he vindicated her because she kept

bothering him and was wearing him out (vv. 2-5). After telling this parable, Jesus said: “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (vv. 6-8) What does it mean? Doesn't this mean that God's chosen ones will soon hear your supplications crying out day and night? But what's the problem? It is our faith. Surely God is a God who hears our constant cry of prayer. But the problem is that we continue to doubt Him. Especially when God's prayers are delayed, we doubt God. Regarding those who pray to God in doubt, James 1:6-8 in the Bible says: “But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.” The Bible says that those who pray to God while doubting are double-minded and unstable in all he does. The Bible says that such a person should not think that he will receive anything from the Lord. Perhaps the reason why you and I continue to pray to our Heavenly Father and yet we do not receive answers to our prayers is because we have doubts when we pray to him?

In today's text, Matthew 7:8, the reason why Jesus said, “For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” was because he wanted to teach his disciples to pray with the assurance (faith) that their prayers will be answered while continuing to ask God the Father. This is what John Calvin said: ‘Nothing inspires and encourages our prayers more than the assurance that God always hears our prayers. Prayers with doubts are nothing but dead rituals that are powerless, cold and negligent’ (Park). In fact, when we pray with the assurance of answers to our prayers, don't we get great comfort and strength? Not only that, when we have the assurance of answers to our prayers, our hearts become peaceful and bold. There are promises in the Bible that give us the assurance of answers to our prayers: “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Mt. 21:22), “You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (Jn. 14:14), “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you” (15:17). It is the faithful covenant God who grants our prayers. He is a God who faithfully fulfills his promises to us. The amazing thing is that even though we are unfaithful, God is faithful (2 Tim. 2:13) and faithfully fulfills his promises to us. What should we do? We must continue to pray to our Heavenly Father in faith. In other words, we must constantly ask God for good things with the assurance of answers to our prayers. Look at Jude 1:20 – “But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.” When we pray to our Heavenly Father, we must pray not only in faith, but also in the Holy Spirit. As we pray in faith and in the Holy Spirit, we must continue to ask in faith in our unchanging Heavenly Father, who gives us every good and perfect gift. Look at James 1:17 – “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.” Clearly, the Bible says that every good and perfect gift come down from the Heavenly Father who does not change. I hope and pray that you and I will continue to pray to Heavenly Father with faith in this word and pray with the assurance of answers to prayers.

Third and last, it is a comparison of prayer. The comparison is the evil father and our Heavenly Father.

Look at Matthew 7:9-11: “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” After telling his disciples to keep asking God the Father for good gifts with the assurance of answers to their prayers, Jesus compared the evil father and our Heavenly Father in Matthew 7:9-11. The point of this comparison is that if they know that a physical father, though evil, gives good gifts to his children, how much more will the good Heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him. Even if we think with common sense, isn't this correct? What earthly father would give his children a snake when he asks for a fish? Wouldn't even the father, no matter how evil, try to give good things to his children, at least to his own blood? How much more will our Heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask? When I think of the word “how much more” (v. 11) here, I meditate on two Bible verses: (1) The first Bible verse is Luke 18:7 – “And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?” This is what Jesus said in a parable that we should always pray and never lose heart (v. 1). In this parable, Jesus compared a judge in a certain city, who did not fear God and did not care about men (v. 2) and God (v. 7). The content of the comparison is that if the unjust judge (v. 6) also granted the plea of a widow who kept on bothering him in order to get justice, how much more would God bring about justice for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night? (v. 7) If even the unjust judge granted the petition of a widow who bothered him, would our heavenly Father God hear and answer the prayers of the chosen me and all of you, whom he loves? (2) The second Bible verse is Jonah 4:11 – “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?” This word was spoken by God to his servant Jonah the prophet, and God compared Jonah with God himself. The content of this comparison is that Jonah had compassion on the plant for which he did not work and did not cause it to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight (Jon 4:10), and that God had compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there were more than 120,000 people who did not know the difference between the right and left hand (v. 11). Does the plant matter or 120,000 souls matter? On what more should we have compassion? If we cherish the momentary things for which we did not labor, how much more, God loves us so much that he gave his only begotten Son Jesus on the cross for us.

In Isaiah 49:15, God says: “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” Here, God is comparing the mother who gives birth to and raises a suckling baby and God himself. The point of that comparison is that even if the mother forgets her child, God never forgets us. How could a mother forget her child? But even if she forgets, the Father God will never forget us, whom he has adopted as his children in Jesus Christ. And no mother will ever give a drug to her baby when she cries. How much more will our heavenly Father give the best to us who are praying to him?

There is a story about Pastor George Mueller's 52 years of persistent prayer (Internet). It is said that the prayer subject he spent the most time on was praying for the salvation of five friends he had shared life with since childhood. Pastor Mueller, who continued to pray for these five friends, began to believe in one or two people. But there were two friends who did not believe until the end. So Pastor Mueller prayed for them for about 52 years. It is said that Pastor Mueller is now old, and one day he preached the word at church, earnestly preaching the last sermon with the last remaining strength of his life. It is said that one of his friends who was listening to his last sermon that day repented and believed in Jesus. However, the other friend said he did not believe in Jesus. Eventually, Pastor Mueller passed away. After that, the friend who had not believed until then heard the news of Pastor Mueller's death. But in particular, he heard that his friend Pastor Mueller had been praying for him for 52 years and eventually came to believe in Jesus. It is said that after believing, the friend testified as he toured the whole of England: 'All of Pastor Mueller's prayers have been answered. And I am the final answer. All your prayers will be answered.' I hope and pray that we will be able to receive God's answers to our prayers and glorify God by constantly asking and seeking our heavenly Father with the assurance of answer to our prayers.

Let's treat others.

[Matthew 7:12]

Are you being treated well? In Pohang, there is 'Seven Commandments of How to Be Treated' written by Mr. Seung-gil Lee, who lives in Pohang. Perhaps the original title is 'How to be treated when you are old'. But it could also be applied to everyone, old or young (Internet): (1) 'Clean Up – Keep your home and environment clean. Organize quarterly - arrange - boldly discard unnecessary items. Valuables - Don't let your belongings rust by hiding them in a closet. No one will notice even if you leave it as an inheritance. Give it as a gift to a friend or neighbor while you are alive. How happy would they be? How cool is that. (2) Dress Up – Always keep your appearance neat, so as not to be sloppy. Don't spare your clothes. Dye your hair. Wear clothes in trendy colors. Clean your shoes. (3) Shut Up – Close your mouth. Listen better than speak. Don't say 'In my old days I ...', 'Once upon a time I ...', 'If I could just add one word ...' Even if I don't say it, everyone knows it well. Don't make people tired. Do I always need to say something? Ask yourself. (4) Show Up – Don't miss out on all meetings: Church, alumni association, family reunion, unusual meeting, club meeting...etc. Didn't it say out of sight, out of mind? Even if it bothers you - even if you don't want to go - go meet them. (5) Cheer Up – Always live bright and happy. Even if there is nothing to be bright and nothing to be happy about, pretend to be bright and pretend to be happy. It's strange. In that way, there will be an unprecedented brightness and an unprecedented joy. (6) Pay Up – If you don't have money, give it to your body. If your body isn't cool, say words of blessing with your mouth. Don't take, give. Blessed is the giver. There has to be something to help everywhere. There is a saying: 'The more you open your mouth, the lower your dignity. The more the wallet is opened, the more elegant it is. If you close your mouth and open your wallet, your dignity will reach the sky.' (7) Give Up – This is the most important part. Give up. Do not wait for something in the relationship between husband and wife-relatives-children-friends-neighbors. Do not wish. Isn't it time you know that there is a different path that you and I have to go my own way? Don't have lingering attachment. So light your heart and go your way.

In today's text, Matthew 7:12, Jesus says, "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets." With the title of "Let's treat others," centering on this message today, I hope and pray that we will all glorify God by receiving and obeying the lessons the Lord gives to us.

Do you like to be treated? I read an Internet column under the title, ‘How to treat foreigners in international transactions?’ The reason I read that article is because the person who wrote it also mentioned Matthew 7:12. She has been in the trading business for more than 25 years and has met and entertained many foreigners of different nationalities and cultures, telling the universal truth that does not change when hosting foreigners: As the saying goes, ‘A word that goes well, a word that comes is good’ and ‘A single word pays a thousand dollars’, it is said that if you treat someone with all your heart and not only with words, then there will always be a reward from the other person as well (Internet). Who wouldn't like to be treated with sincerity? Don't we all like to be treated? And my personal opinion is to be treated, I don't think there's anything wrong with it. The problem isn't our instinct to be treated. It's that we don't treat others the way we want them to be treated. For example, I was treated with sincerity by the other person, so I felt really good. But I treat the other person roughly without being sincere. Why do we treat other like this? I think the reason is because we do not believe in the principle of blessing that “It is more blessed to give than to receive” in Acts 20:35. And the reason is because even though we know the joy of receiving, we do not know the joy of giving. Another problem is that we treat others with complaints and resentment instead of with a joyful heart. A good example is the story of Martha serving Jesus in Luke 10:38-42. Martha, who welcomed Jesus into her home (v. 38), was busy with many preparations (v. 40). But Mary, her sister, did not help her. Rather she sat at the Lord's feet and listened to the Lord's words (v. 39). Then Martha went to Jesus and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me” (v. 40). Then Jesus said to Martha, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (vv. 41-42). Actually, like Martha, aren't we going to worry and bother about so many things, even after we invited our pastor to come to our house and try to welcome and treat the servant of the Lord? How hard is it for housewives to see her husband or her children leaving her to work when guests come home? Therefore, serving guests with joy is not an easy task. Perhaps that's why it's not easy to see often inviting guests to our home with a happy and voluntary heart in the busy life of immigrants. But God tells us in 1 Peter 4:9, “Be hospitable to one another without complaint.” Also, God commands this in Romans 12:13, “contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.” Just thinking about these two verses in the Bible, shouldn't we strive to treat others?

Today's text, the literal translation of Jesus' words in Matthew 7:12, is as follows: ‘Everything that you want people to do to you, do to them in the same way’ (Park). What do we really want people to do for us? When I think of this question, I found the answer in Luke 6:31-32, which is similar to today's text Matthew 7:17 – “Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.” In other words, what people want to do to us is that they love us. Don't you think so? Don't you want people to love you? Personally, when I think of “love,” two gospel songs come to mind. Of course, there is a gospel song based on 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: “Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” But I especially like the gospel song “You Are Born

to be Loved” and the gospel song “For another Fruit”. When I think of “love”, the reason I especially think of the two gospel songs is that the titles of the songs themselves are a comfort and a challenge to me. It is a great comfort to me that I was born into this world to receive God's love, and that God's love began from the beginning. How grateful are you? The love of God of those who love me, who made me realize how precious I am in the eyes of God. I am grateful that someone like me is loved by God, and that God wants to convey that love, and that God wants to bear the fruit of love through me. When we think of God's love for us from the beginning, shouldn't we become channels of the Lord's love and convey that love to others? Shouldn't we love our neighbor with God's love, as Jesus commanded? How, then, should we love our neighbor? I want to meditate on three things, focusing on Luke 6:31-36, which is similar to Matthew 7:12, and receive a lesson from the Bible:

First, we must not only love those who love us.

Look at Luke 6:32-33: “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.” What do you think of these words of Jesus? Do you not agree with Jesus' words that we love only those who love us, do good only to those who do us good, and sinners do the same? Don't people in the world who do not believe in Jesus love those who love them and do good to those who do good to them? Isn't this kind of love everyone can do? But now, Jesus is telling His disciples not to only love the kind of love that everyone in the world can do. In other words, Jesus is telling us to love more, more sacrificial love (Radmacher). I would like to ask a question to our sisters in Christ. Sisters, if your husband loves you and treats you well, won't you of course love your husband and treat him well too? But if your husband doesn't love you from your point of view, would you still love your husband? Would you still be good to him? Our human love is selfish. Also, our love is conditional. But God's love is unselfish. And God's love is unconditional. In particular, God's love is sacrificial. In other words, God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on the cross. In this way, God's love is sacrificial. If we knew this God's sacrificial love, we would not only love those who love us. We should not only do good to those who do us good. Such love and good deeds will never be praised by the Lord.

Second, we should lend to people without expecting to receive.

Look at Luke 6:34 – “If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount.” In this age we live in now, when we borrow money (loan) from a bank, we have to pay the bank interest on the amount as well as the amount borrowed. In fact, when our children or grandchildren go to college or graduate school to study, if the family cannot help them financially, they get a loan from the bank to study. Then, when they finish their studies, they get a job to pay off the debt. However, it is not easy to actually repay the debt as interest is charged in addition to the loaned money. However, in the Old Testament times, Jews did not charge interest on loans. This is because the Old Testament forbade paying interest. Look at Leviticus 25:35-37: “Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his

means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Do not take usurious interest from him, but revere your God, that your countryman may live with you. You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain.” And the Jewish law required all debts to be forgiven in the seventh year (cf. Deut. 15:9) (probably now I know that the money we loaned to the bank becomes null and void when we die). So, for many Jewish creditors, lending money to financially struggling Jews as the seventh year approached was a loss of their investment. So they didn't lend. The reason is that you cannot get back what you borrowed. As a result, the farmers who live on small farms were inevitably hit hard. At that time, the Jewish teachers allowed the poor to borrow to avoid this law. But the condition was that they could borrow from Jewish creditors when they could repay what they borrowed. Jesus, who knew this, said to his disciples, “If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount” (Lk. 6:34). In other words, when those who have have lend to those who do not have, lend rather than expect to receive. This is the lesson to lend even if you lose the money because you do not receive the money you borrowed (Keener). Compare this teaching of Jesus with the teachings of the Old Testament. See, for example, the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 15:7-9: “If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks. Beware that there is no base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you.” The Mosaic Law tells us to lend generously to our poor brother for what he needs. It tells us not to have evil thoughts in our hearts that give us nothing because the seventh year of exemption is near. In fact, in Luke 6:35 Jesus is teaching his disciples to love them more than the Old Testament tells them to do: “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.” If we look again at Matthew 5:43-44, which we have already meditated on, Jesus is saying to his disciples: “You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” This is what the Pharisees inherited in the Old Testament, Leviticus 19:18, in the words of God, “love your neighbor,” and ‘hate your enemies,’ with their incorrect idea of ‘hate your enemies.’ So Jesus has now corrected it. Jesus taught us to love our enemies and pray for them. This is the essence of love (Park). Jesus, who taught us the essence of this love, is speaking more specifically about love for our enemies here in Luke 6:35. The point of those words is to love and do good even to your enemies, but lend without expecting anything from them. How would you respond to this lesson of Jesus, telling us not to be poor and to lend money without expecting anything from our enemies? Why is Jesus telling us to love even our enemies and be good to them, and lend them without expecting from them? The reason is because our God is kind to the ungrateful and the evil men (v. 35). In other words, since we are children of God, who is kind to the ungrateful and the evil men, we should love and do good even to our enemies and lend with words, hoping for nothing. In doing so, Jesus promises that our reward will be great, and we will become sons of the Most High God.

Third and last, we must be merciful. In other words, we must show mercy.

Look at Luke 6:36 – ““Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” When we think of Jesus' teaching that we should have mercy on our neighbors, we should meditate on the story of the good Samaritan in Luke 10. The reason Jesus told this story was when a certain lawyer (Lk. 10:25) asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (v. 29), Jesus said the true neighbor to a man who met robbers was neither a priest nor a Levite, but the good Samaritan who had mercy on him (vv. 33-37). Listen to Jesus' question and the lawyer's answer: “‘Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?’ And he said, ‘The one who showed mercy toward him.’” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same” (vv.36-37). Luke 6:36 we read today is similar to Matthew 5:48 – “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Isn't it interesting? In Matthew 5, Matthew talks about the love that Jesus taught, and after writing down Jesus' instruction to love even our enemies, he concludes in verse 48, saying, “Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” Isn't it interesting that in Luke 6:36, Luke tells the lesson of Jesus' love for enemies, and then in verse 36 he says, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”? When we meditate on these two verses together, we cannot help but think that our Heavenly Father's perfection and mercy are connected. In other words, our Father in heaven loved us as our enemies with perfect love and showed us mercy. Look at Romans 5:10 – “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” The God of heaven loved us and had mercy on us until, when we were enemies with God, He gave up His Son, Jesus, on the cross for our salvation. Therefore, as children of our Heavenly Father, we are to be merciful to our enemies, even as our father. This is an expression of the perfect love of our Heavenly Father.

There is a proverb among the Jews: ‘Hospitality to a stranger is a greater thing than to show the reverence of the name of God’ (Internet). This means that hospitality was very important to the Jews. Doesn't the sound of church bells calling us to prayer and worship sound very familiar to our ears? In the same way, the sound of the doorbell on our front door should actually feel familiar to our ears. Hospitality is a way of connecting the flow of charity that begins with God to continue through us to others. As soon as gratitude disappears from our hearts, this holy flow stops there. When we welcome and treat people with kindness and respect, the gifts of life flow back into the world and eventually return to their original source. God's love must flow constantly and flow into the world through the flow of giving in our daily lives. We must keep that gift flowing to others. The lesson we received from Jesus today – ‘Whatever you would like people to do to you, do to them likewise’ – what will you do now? We should love our neighbor as we all want to be loved. Not only should we love those who love us, but we should also love and do good to those who hate us with God's love. Let's not expect to receive. But let's love to give and show mercy. I hope and pray that you and I will shine the love of the Lord into the world.

“Enter through the narrow gate”

[Matthew 7:13-14]

Are you good at “yes” when you say “yes” and “no” when you say “no”? In Matthew 5:37, Jesus tells us: “Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” The reason I came to think of this is because I had this realization while meditating on the words of Ezra 4:3 at the early Morning Prayer meeting on Thursday last week and reading Dr. Yoon-sun Park's commentary on Ezra 4:1-3: ‘The decisive act of refusal when someone with whom you do not have a spiritual commonality offers to join is biblical’ (Park). Of course, in the words meditating on Ezra 4:3, “enemies of Judah and Benjamin” (v. 1) said to the leaders of Judah and Benjamin, “we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing to Him” (v. 2). Because the God they sought and sacrificed was not the God of Israel (the only God), the leaders of Israel flatly refused, saying, “You have nothing in common with us in building a house to our God” (v. 3). Because of the decisive refusal of the leaders of Israel in this way (v. 4), they face tribulation and persecution. If you are like the Israelite leaders, would you reject them as decisively as the leaders of Israel, even though you knew you would face tribulation and persecution? Obviously, if you say “no” to the other person, would you say “no” even though you know you will suffer? If you simply say “yes” to the other person, there is no need for suffering and no hardship or persecution, would you still say “no” to “no” in the eyes of God? In connection with today's text Matthew 7:13-14, the question is again: "Will you choose the narrow path of 'No' or the broad path of 'Yes'?"

In today's text, Matthew 7:13, Jesus is telling his disciples to "Enter through the narrow gate". I would like to take this word as the title and to receive the lessons that Jesus gives us while meditating on the words of Jesus. I hope and pray that all of us will receive eternal life as we receive and obey the instruction of the Lord.

In today's text, Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus is telling us two gates. Those two gates are “the narrow gate” and “the wide gate”. Jesus says that the narrow gate is small and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (v. 14). And He says that the wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it (v. 13). Then, what we need to think about here is what is the “narrow gate” and the “wide gate” Jesus is talking about. First of all, the wide gate Jesus is talking about refers to ‘the broad gate’. And Jesus is saying that many go in through that broad gate, because the gate is wide. But Jesus is saying that few enter through the narrow gate, that is, the small gate. Why? The reason is because the small gate is narrow. The original Greek literal meaning of the

word “narrow” here is “restricted” (Friberg). That is, in Matthew 7:14, Jesus says that the gate is narrow and the road that leads to life is narrow, which means 'the road that leads to life is limited' (Friberg). And when Jesus says small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life (v. 14), the original Greek for the word 'narrow,' the figurative meaning of the word is to experience hardship or to be afflicted (2 Cor. 1:6) (Friberg). In other words, why are few people going through the narrow gate, not only because those who enter through that gate are limited, but also because there are hardships (tribulation) on the narrow road that enters through that gate. This word gives some reason as to why so many people walk the wide road to get to the broad gate. It is because there is no affliction or tribulation on the broad road. It is because there is no need to suffer through faith in Jesus on that broad road. That is why many people walk on that broad road.

After all, in today's text, Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus is talking to his disciples two gates, two ways, two destinations, and two groups of people (MacArthur). The first group, many, are walking on the broad road to enter the wide gate, but their destination is “destruction” (v. 13). In other words, the destination of many (great) crowds walking through the wide gate, the broad road, is eternal death in Hell. But the second group of people, though few, will walk down the small road and enter the narrow gate, their destination being “life” (v. 14) that is, eternal life in heaven. So, the question that can be asked here is who are the large crowds trying to get in through the wide gate Jesus is talking about, and who are the little crowds trying to get in through the narrow gate? The great crowd refers to the Pharisees who are legalists in the context of today's text. More realistically, it could be said that the great crowd are those who seek to be saved by works. Look at Matthew 6:5 – “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.” Here “the street” refers to a major road with a lot of people coming and going (Internet). The Pharisees who were the hypocrites loved to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. These Pharisees were a large crowd who were walking in the broad road to enter the wide gate that Jesus was talking about in Matthew 7:13-14. Even now, like the Pharisees at the time of Jesus, there are many people who want to be saved through works, which are human efforts. The road they walk is broad and the gate they want to enter is wide. For example, if you look at many religions in the world, the core of their teachings is that human effort (will) can achieve their salvation. One example is Buddhism. The theory of soteriology taught in Buddhism says that salvation can be obtained by practicing the eight ways to reach nirvana (the Eightfold Path) that Sakyamuni said. In other words, Buddhism insists on the idea of self-salvation. And the salvation that Buddhists believe in is liberation (nirvana) (the eternal escape) from the cycle of suffering (Internet). Another example is Islam. What is the Islamic view of salvation? In a word, Islam's view of salvation is also self-salvation. In other words, Muslims believe that salvation comes by keeping the precepts written in the Qur'an and allowing good deeds to outnumber evil deeds. So salvation is the responsibility of each individual (Internet).

So what about Hinduism? In Hinduism, the concept of salvation refers to the individual soul becoming one with the divine universal reality. The god that Hindus believe is Brahman. And when one realizes the wisdom that Brahman is Atman (human), the wheel of reincarnation (just as the wheel constantly rolls, sentient beings are freed

from the world of life and death of the three realms and six paths through defilements and karma) experiences the experience of liberation, becoming one with the universe. In the end, Hinduism's salvation ideology can be seen as an experience of becoming one with the universe by realizing that human beings are gods. So, they believe that the path to which Brahman and Atman are united is possible through various methods of meditation. For example, raga yoga offers a way of unity through meditation or mind control; Karma yoga offers a path to unity with Brahman through action; Jnana yoga attempts to unite through knowledge; And, Bhakti yoga offers a way to achieve unity with God through love and devotion. Therefore, Hinduism's view of salvation is ultimately based on human efforts, and through various yoga practices, one realizes the unity of self and Brahman and seeks to save oneself (Internet). Their destination is never heaven (eternal life). Rather, the Bible teaches us that their destination is hell (destruction). Why? The reason is that there is no one in this world who can be saved by human effort and deeds. In other words, salvation is not achieved through human works, but only through faith in Jesus who died on the cross. Look at Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." The Bible Acts 4:12 clearly tells us: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." What does it mean? It means that the only name under the world that can be saved is the name of Jesus (meaning: God is salvation). In other words, only through Jesus can we be saved.

Who then walks the narrow road and enters through the small gate? Clearly, Jesus is saying that there are a small number of people who enter that gate, but who are the few? This small group of people believe that salvation can only be achieved through faith in Jesus. In other words, these little flock are those who believe in Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6). These are the few restricted groups who enter through the narrow gate that leads to life. Do you understand? When I think of the limited few who enter the narrow gate, it reminds me of the doctrine of "Limited atonement" in our Reformed theology. Here, "Limited atonement" is the third of the famous five doctrines of the Reformer John Calvin. And the essence of the doctrine is that Jesus died on the cross only for those whom God had chosen before the foundation of the world. This is "the doctrine of limited atonement". This is the doctrine that Jesus died on the cross only for those whom He knew. Jesus taught this clearly. Look at John 10:14-15: "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." The important thing here is what kind of sheep it is, since Jesus said He would die for the sheep. Jesus said "My own" which means His sheep. Look at verse 26. Jesus said "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep." Jesus did not die for sheep that were not His sheep. He died for "My sheep" (Internet). 'If you oppose the limited atonement doctrine and accept the universal atonement doctrine, then you will not only misinterpret the above Bible verse, but also denigrate the power of the blood that Jesus shed. If He died for all the souls in the world, each and every one of them, all those souls should be saved. But in reality, this is not the case. If Jesus died for the soul that was about to be destroyed, but in reality, that soul could not be saved, then He died in vain. To make Jesus' death seem in vain is to blaspheme the blood of Jesus. Conversely, limited atonement doctrine emphasizes that Jesus died for His sheep and for His people. But that death had an infallible effect on behalf of those who died. This is important. The point of limited atonement is that God

always saves who He wants to save. Going back to John 10:28-29, it is clear that this point is emphasized: “and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand” (Internet). However, we must bear in mind that this doctrine of limited atonement in no way means that there is no limit to the value and power of Christ's accomplished atonement. In other words, the atonement power of the cross of Jesus has the power to save all people in the world. But God loved in His sovereignty and offered the power of salvation only to the people He chose before the foundation of the world. However, here we who believe in limited atonement are misunderstood and need to beware. That is, atonement occurs only to those who have been pre-chosen doesn't mean that it should quench the passion of evangelism, such as evangelism to the public, which is evangelizing to all people in general. In particular, we Reformed believers who thoroughly believe in predestination and limited atonement should be more wary of this (Internet). The reason is because we do not know who God has chosen (only God knows), we must diligently preach the gospel to everyone, just as Jesus found the lost sheep.

The words implying that there are a few (limited) people who are saved by believing in Jesus Christ are also found in Luke 13:23-24, which is similar to Matthew 7:13-14: “And someone said to Him, ‘Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?’ And He said to them, ‘Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.’” Jesus is telling us to strive to enter through the narrow door. The reason is because many will seek to enter and will not be able. Jesus is saying that there are many those who cannot even if they try to enter through the narrow gate. It's not the "don't do it", it's the "can't do it". Therefore, like the question posed by someone who came to Jesus and said, “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” Those who are being saved are not a large group, but a small number. And the Bible says that once the Lord closes the narrow (small) gate of heaven, it will be of no use no matter how many people knock on the door while crying out, “Sir, open the door for us” (v. 25). Rather, in Luke 13:25, Jesus is saying that the owner of the house would say: “I do not know where you are from.” As a result, that large crowd will be weeping and gnashing their teeth outside the kingdom of God, Jesus says (v. 28).

In Jeremiah 21:8, God says: “You shall also say to this people, “Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.” God has set before us the way of life and the way of death. The way of death is a broad road, and there are many who enter it. The reason is because the road is easy and comfortable (Hagner). But the way of life is narrow. And there are tribulations and persecutions for those who walk on that road. That's why few people find that narrow gate. But today Jesus is telling us to enter through that narrow gate because that narrow gate leads to eternal life. This is what Jesus says in John 10:7 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.” And Jesus said, “If anyone enters through me, he will be saved” (v. 9). This is the purpose of Jesus coming to this world. He came “that they might have life, and have it abundantly” (v. 10). I bless you in the name of Jesus that you may enter through that narrow gate through faith in this Jesus and receive eternal life.

“Beware of the false prophets”

[Matthew 7:15]

Last Monday, I was invited by a senior pastor to attend a pastor's seminar at the church he serves. The pastor, a lecturer from Korea, said that it was a diagnosis of the problems of the Korean church, which he made after his own research in the Korean church. He said three things, but I couldn't help but agree: (1) The belief (faith) of the Korean church members is not pure faith, but a mixture of Buddhism, Confucianism, and shamanism. (2) The Korean church members are leading a double life. Life inside the church is different from life outside the church. (3) It is that the gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of God are not being preached in the Korean church pulpit. As a result, it is a diagnosis that the faith of Korean church members is not pure and they are leading a double life. What do you think of this diagnosis? When I think of this diagnosis, I meditate on Amos 8:11 again: “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD.” The hunger that is coming to us Christians now is not that we are hungry and thirsty because we do not have food or water, but that we cannot hear the word of God. We are spiritually hungry and thirsty now. Since the word of God is not being preached correctly from the church pulpit, but rather, sermons that scratch people's itching ears are pouring out like a flood, we do not receive sound doctrine and accumulate for ourselves teachers in accordance to our own desires (2 Tim.4:3). As a result, we now are easily exposed to the false teachings of false teachers. In other words, now we are all too easily exposed to the delusion of heresy. Last week, I received an e-mail from a sister in Christ who is living in Daejeon, Korea. She said that, thinking of her beloved daughter and son, she decided to become an example of faith and registered with a church she had been to three times in order to live a Christian life. It was really good news. But what made me a little puzzled was that she came home after receiving education as a new believer at the church he registered with and the beginning of that education was ‘What is heresy?’ The reason I was puzzled is because the main topic of new Christian education is to teach about who Jesus is, what He did, and basic and fundamental Christian truths such as faith, the Bible, and prayer, and etc.. But when I thought about why the church in Daejeon would teach new believers about heresy first, I thought it might be because the church won a victory in 2007 after about four years of legal battle over defamation with the Salvation Sect, Ock-soo Park. At that time, the head of the Daejeon Christian Federation's Heresy Countermeasures Committee was the senior pastor of the Daejeon Church, and it was probably the final victory in the Supreme Court after hard work. The church's website had a post that read: ‘The victory of

the _____ church is not simply a victory for the local church. He proved the heresy of Ock-soo Park to the entire Korean church and showed how difficult it is to keep the truth. At the same time, he reminded me of the will to do and what to do in the Korean church, which is immersed in safety. Church history shows that the struggle against heresy is always a long and difficult road. ... The General Assembly must stand firm in the fight against heresy and defend the truth' (Internet).

We must defend the truth. To do this, we must grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6; 2 Pet. 3:18; Eph.4:13; Col. 1:10; Phil. 3:8). And as we learned last week in Matthew 7:13-14, we must enter through the narrow gate (v. 13). We must strive to enter through the narrow gate that leads to life (v. 14; Lk. 13:23). We must walk faithfully on that narrow road, where the gate is small and the road is narrow, and there are few who find it. Although there may be adversity, suffering, and persecution as we walk the path that Jesus walked, we must walk step by step with faith and courage, believing that the path is the path that leads to life. How can we boldly walk that path? The reason is that our Lord walks the path with us. So I sang this hymn in the car while driving the early Morning Prayer meeting on Wednesday last week and sang the song to God together with the saints I love during the early Morning Prayer meeting: (v. 1) Gently lead me all the way; I am safe when by Thy side, I would in Thy love abide. (v. 2) Thou the refuge of my soul, When life's stormy billows roll, I am safe when Thou art nigh, All my hopes on Thee rely. (v. 3) Saviour, lead me, then at last, When the storm of life is past, To the land of endless day, Where all tears are wiped away. (Chorus) Lead me, lead me, Saviour, lead me, lest I stray; Gently down the stream of time, Lead me, Saviour, all the way. I would like to meditate on today's text with the title of "Beware of the false prophets" based on verse 15, following Matthew 7:13-14 that I meditated on last week. I hope and pray that God will grant us grace so that we can hear the voice of God, and that we will be able to obey the voice we hear.

Last week we meditated on what Jesus said about "two gates" in verses 13-14. Those two gates were the narrow gate and the wide gate. Today Jesus is talking about "two animals" in verse 15 (Willmington). Those two animals are "sheep" and "wolves". Look at Matthew 7:15 – "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves." When Jesus told his disciples to "Beware of false prophets", that is, 'Beware, be careful, be on guard of the false prophets' (Friberg), He spoke of "sheep" and "wolf." Why was that? Why did Jesus speak of these two animals? When you hear the word "sheep," what image of sheep do you think of? When we say "sheep", doesn't the image of "pure" come to mind? You can imagine a sheep of pure white, covered with flour-white hairs, without blemishes, spots, or dust. And when we say "sheep", I think there is an image of 'you are innocent, and we can't find any evil even in their eyes.' So the sheep is fundamentally separated from all the evil things in this world to such an extent that even if a sword comes into it, it does not rebel at all (Internet). But Jesus, who is the Passover Lamb, said in today's text Matthew 7:15, "Beware of the false prophets," and that false prophets come to us "in sheep's clothing." What that means is that the false prophets outwardly look like sheep. In other words, they put on the false prophets' sheep's clothing and act like sheep. So, on

the surface, the false prophets seem like sheep and harmless us. But do the false prophets in sheep's clothing do any harm to us?

I still remember. 22-3 years ago, when I was in college, there was a sister in Christ who was in the same Christian club. And I remember that she fell into a cult and had a lot of trouble getting out of it. At that time, she seemed to have testified in a Christian club after breaking out of that heresy that the cult people were so nice to her at first. I heard that perhaps the heretics invited her to their house and treated her very well. But later she found out that the church to which those people belonged was a cult. I remember that the name of the heretical denomination to which the church belonged was the same as another denomination that was not a cult. Therefore, it was not easy for most Christians to tell whether the denomination or church was a cult or not. That's it. The false prophets Jesus is talking about in Matthew 7:15 come to us in sheep's clothing, so it is very difficult for us to tell whether they are sheep or goats. In particular, if the false pastors or the false teachers come to us in sheep's clothing and give us this and that when we are in need, do good to us and love us, there is a great risk that we will believe in them and follow them. That's why Jesus is saying, "Beware of the false prophets" in today's text (v. 15). In other words, Jesus is telling us to beware, be careful, and be on guard of the false prophets.

Why should we be on guard of the false prophets? It is because they outwardly come to us in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are plundering wolves (Mt. 7:15). What kind of animal is the wolf? The Bible describes it as a cruel animal that comes to harm precious sheep. For example, in Genesis 49:27 in the Old Testament, we can see that Jacob said this about his last son Benjamin while blessing his twelve sons: "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he devours the prey, And in the evening he divides the spoil." This is an expression of the cruelty of the tribe of Benjamin. In the New Testament, Jesus compared those who persecuted his disciples, his sheep, as wolves. In other words, Jesus said that the word "wolf" referred to an animal that gnaws at sheep. He pointed out that the false shepherd was the wolf (Mt. 7:15) (Internet). How do you distinguish a true shepherd from a false shepherd? In John 10:14-15, Jesus is speaking of himself, saying: "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep." What does it mean? It means that Jesus is the good shepherd, that is, the true shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep. But what of the false shepherd like a wolf? In John 10, Jesus describes the false shepherd as "a hired hand." Look at John 10:12-13: "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. "He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep." The hired hand is not a shepherd. He doesn't take care of the sheep. When he sees a wolf coming, he abandons his sheep and runs away. As a result, the wolf bites the sheep and also ravages them. Rather, the false shepherd does not take care of the sheep, but only takes care of himself (Ezek. 34:2). And Zechariah 11:17 says that the false shepherd is the worthless shepherd who forsakes the flock. The Apostle Paul said in Acts 20:29-30: "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." These words are part of the Apostle Paul's words from Miletus to Ephesus, to ask for the

elders of the church (v. 17) and to tell them that after he left the church in Ephesus, “savage wolves” i.e., the false prophets, the false leaders, or the false prophets would come to them. The characteristic of the false shepherd is that he does not spare his flock. And that false shepherd leads the flock astray. In John 10:10, when Jesus describes the false shepherd as a “thief,” he is saying that the false shepherd only wants to steal, kill, and destroy.

Do you know why the false shepherd who spares no sheep steals? Today's text, Matthew 7:15, speaks of “ravenous,” and its Greek word meaning here is extremely (violently) greedy, like a robber or a deceiver (Friberg). Have you ever seen pictures of a 6-year-old disabled child who died on June 1 in the Internet JoongAng Ilbo newspaper last week after suffering from intestinal obstruction symptoms for 6 months at an orphanage in Iksan, Jeollabuk-do, but without proper treatment? (Internet) I was surprised to see the picture. The figure of a lying child with nothing but bones left was very dry. After seeing the picture, while preparing for a sermon, I saw another newspaper article about the incident published on the 4th of June in the Maeil Business Newspaper, and the title of the article was ‘Bad Pastor in sheep’s clothing’ (Internet). As for why the title of the article is so, the person who runs the nursery where the dead child was living is Pastor Kim (52 years old), who left the dead 6-year-old disabled child who needed continuous hospital treatment for 6 months due to a congenital brain lesion disorder. This is because, by the time he was released, he collected 140 million won in childcare allowance (in the name of living allowance paid to 29 primary school students, disability allowance, labor cost, etc.) and used it for personal living expenses, etc. Specifically, he fabricated documents as if his daughter and Elder Baek (57 years old) were falsely working as childcare teachers and paid 11.85 million won in the name of salary, and even paid 11.8 million won to his daughter studying in the United States. However, it is said that Pastor Kim Mo was a “two-faced pastor”. In other words, it may have been a respected pastor in the front, but it seems that the hidden appearance was not so. He is said to have been a church pastor who had built a reputation for caring for homeless children for over 10 years (Internet). Why is this happening? Why are there news articles titled ‘The Two-Face Pastor’ and ‘The Bad Pastor in sheep’s clothing’? The reason is greed. Didn't this happen because he was greedy for money more than the life of the child in charge? As Jesus said, the false prophet (the false pastor) outwardly wears sheep's clothing, but inside is a ravenous wolf (Mt. 7:15). And as the Apostle Paul said, the false pastors like ferocious wolves do not spare God's flock (Acts 20:29). On the contrary, the false pastors steal even the money that the faithful donated (1 Cor. 6:10). The reason is because they are greedy (v. 10).

Jesus is telling us in Matthew 10:16a – “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves” Like those who were sent out among the wolves, we are living in the world where there are many false pastors who are outwardly clothed in sheep’s clothing, but on the inside is like predatory wolves who are full of greed. How should we beware, wary, and be on guard of false pastors? I found the answer in the second half of Matthew 10:16, the words of Jesus: “... so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.” First, we must come as wise as serpents. We are wise as serpents to be on the lookout for people, to beware and to be on guard (v. 17). Why should we be wary, beware, and be on guard of people? This is because, as Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:11, many false prophets have arisen now and are deceiving many people. Because now the false Christs and the false prophets have arisen

and are performing signs and wonders, trying to deceive, if possible, the elect (13:22), we should be wise as serpents and be wary, beware, be on guard of the false Christs, the false prophets, the false pastors, and the false teachers. And we must be wise in what is good. Look at Romans 16:19 – “For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.” Although we must be wise in what is good, we must be innocent in what is evil. And we must be as innocent as doves (Mt. 10:16). The Greek literal meaning of the word “innocent” here is “unmixed, pure” (Walvoord). In other words, we must be as innocent as doves toward God (Park). To do this, we must purify our souls by obeying the pure Word of God (Ps. 12:6; 1 Pet. 1:22).

In the Bible 2 Peter 2:1, the Apostle Peter prophesied like this: “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” Now, according to the words of this prophecy, there are false prophets and false teachers among us as well as in the early church age. And they are secretly introducing a heresy that leads us to destruction. The essence of this heresy is to deny the Lord. Even the sects leading the cult even claim to be the Messiah (Christ). Pastor Yong-sik Jin, president of the Korean Christian Heresy Counseling Center and a lecturer on the Joint Heresy Countermeasures Committee, said this at the ‘LA Cult Countermeasure Seminar’ at the Covenant Church in Los Angeles on May 27, 2011: ‘There are more than 40 Adventists in Korea with a few thousand followers. According to Statistics Korea statistics, there are 8.6 million Protestants, and 2 million of them are engaged in heresy cults. About 20 years ago, there were not many heretical churches with more than 100 members. But these days there are a lot of large heretical churches with more than 1,000 members. In the next 10 to 20 years, it is judged that there may be more heretical churches than orthodox churches in the Korean church’ (Internet). What should we do? We must guard against heresies. And we have to be careful and beware of those who follow these cults. We must listen to the words of 1 John 4:1 – “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

“You will know them by their fruits”

[Matthew 7:16-23]

What do you think of when you hear the word “tree”? When I hear the word “tree”, I remember the sermon I preached on the Friday night prayer meeting in the month of June. On that day, I preached the drama written by God in Esther chapters 2 to 7 from the perspective of a “tree”, focusing on Esther 7:10. King Ahasuerus' wrath ceased as Haman, who was trying to annihilate Mordecai and his people of Judah, hung on the tree he wanted to hang Mordecai, Queen Esther's cousin (v. 10). This reminded me the best drama work. The work is the crucifixion of the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who was hung high on the tree which is under God's curse (Deut. 21:23). When I think about why the humble Jesus, who had no sin, died on the cross for my sake, a proud sinner like “Haman”, I think of how lovely Queen Esther when King Ahasuerus saw her standing in the courtyard of the royal palace (Esth. 5:2). The reason is because the Lord loved a sinner like us so much that He died on the cursed tree. God loved us so much that He had His only begotten Son, Jesus, who had no sin, die on the cross. At that time, just as King Ahasuerus' wrath ceased when Haman died on a tree (7:10), God's wrath ceased. This is because God poured out all his wrath on Jesus who was crucified.

We received a lesson from God while meditating on “two gates” and “two animals” centered on Matthew 7:13-15. If we were to recapitulate the lesson briefly, the title would be “Enter through the narrow gate” and “Beware of the false prophets.” As I meditated on this lesson again last week, I was reminded of the words of Matthew 7:1-6 that we had already meditated on. The reason is because among the three lessons that we were taught [we should not judge (v. 1), we should give up hypocrisy (v. 5), and we must judge (v. 6)], the third lesson (we must judge) is connected with the message of “Enter through the narrow gate” and “Beware of the false prophets”. In other words, we must make good judgment between the two gates, the wide gate and the narrow gate, and choose the narrow gate and walk the narrow path and between the true prophets and the false prophets and must beware and wary of the false prophets. We should not judge by appearances, but judge righteously (Jn. 7:24). In other words, we must discern between good and evil. As the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:15, as spiritual men, we must make judgements about all things. In particular, we must discern spiritual things (v. 13). Therefore, we must listen to the words of 1 John 4:1 – “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Today, I would like to meditate on “two trees” focusing on Matthew 7:16-23. Here, the two trees are “a good tree” and “a bad tree”. When you look at trees, do you know which tree is a good tree and which is a bad tree? If you know, how do you know? If you look at Matthew 7:16 and 20 in today's text, you will find the answer. The answer is that you know them by their fruits. In other words, in order to tell which tree is a good tree, which is a bad tree, we can tell by looking at the fruits of those trees. Even if we think with common sense, it is natural for a good tree to produce good fruit and a bad tree to bear bad fruit (v. 17). And a good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit (v. 18). This is what Jesus said in verse 16: “You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?” How can a thorn tree produce grapes? How can you pick figs from thistles? Isn't the vine bear grapes and the fig tree bear its fruit? In the end, Jesus is talking about two trees in today's text. And He is saying that we can know which tree is good and which is bad by their fruits. Then, what are the good tree and the bad tree that Jesus is talking about in today's text?

Let's start with the bad tree first. The bad tree here can be thought of as two groups of people. The first group refers to the many who walk in the broad road to enter through the wide gate spoken of in verse 13. These refer to the Pharisees who were hypocrites (v. 5) legalists from the point of view of Jesus' day. These Pharisees do not see the log in their own eye, but see the speck in their brother's eye (vv. 3-4). Like dogs and pigs, they are ignorant people who do not know the value of holy things and pearls (v. 6). These are people who do not believe in the gospel of salvation only through faith in Jesus Christ, but rather believe that they can be saved by keeping the law. After all, this bad tree refers to many legalists, such as the Pharisees, who are walking the broad road to enter the wide gate that leads to destruction (v. 13). The second group of people are the false prophets Jesus spoke of in verse 15. The Bible says that the false prophets who are outwardly clothed in sheep's clothing but are like ravenous wolves are the bad tree. In today's text, Matthew 7:17, Jesus is saying that the bad tree bears bad fruit. So, what is the bad fruit here? What is the bad fruit of the wicked tree, the Pharisees or the false prophets? In a word, their bad fruit is destruction (v. 13). These are the ones who secretly introduce destructive heresies, deny the Lord who bought them, and take on their own impending destruction (2 Pet. 2:1).

Even now, the false teachers and the false leaders, such as the bad tree, the Pharisees and the false prophets, are trying to deceive us with the teachings of false doctrines and make us deny the Lord. Now they are deceiving us in order to deceive those whom God has chosen (Mt. 13:22), so that we may walk in the broad road of destruction. As Jesus prophesied, they will rise and perform signs and wonders to deceive the elect if possible (v. 22). As Jesus said in Matthew 7:22, even these are those who say to Jesus “did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” But Jesus said to them, “Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven ... I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (vv. 21, 23) What does it mean? The Pharisees and the false prophets who are like the bad tree, even if they do all things in the name of the Lord, they are lawless in the sight of the Lord, and they will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Rather, they are now walking on the broad road towards the wide gate that leads to destruction. As for their results, Jesus said this in Matthew 7:19 – “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Then who is “a good tree” that Jesus is talking about in today’s text? It is those who dwell in Jesus who is the true vine (Jn. 15:1, 4). In other words, the good trees are those chosen by the Lord (v. 16). In a word, the good trees are the disciples of Jesus, chosen by God, who gain salvation through faith in the good Jesus. Regarding these disciples of Jesus in Matthew 7, Jesus tells three things: (1) They deny that they are saved by keeping the law like the legalists, the Pharisees. And they believe that they can be saved only by believing in Jesus Christ. (2) They strive to enter through the small and narrow gate that leads to life and only a few find it (vv. 13-14). (3) They do not just say “Lord, Lord,” with their lips, but actually do the will of their Heavenly Father in action (v. 21). Here, what is Heavenly Father’s will for them to do? A few examples can be found in the context of today’s text: They do not sit in the judge’s seat and judge (condemn) the other (v. 1). Also, they are not hypocrites (v. 5). Rather, they seek good things from their Heavenly Father (vv. 7-11). They also treat others as they would like to be treated (v. 12). Then why did the Lord choose us? Look at John 15:16 – “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.” Jesus is clearly saying that the purpose for which He has chosen us is to go and bear (eternal) fruit. Jesus is speaking of that eternal fruit as good fruit in Matthew 7:17-19. Then what are the good fruit (vv. 17, 18, 19) that these disciples of Jesus bear? We can think of it in three ways: (1) It is eternal life (v. 14). In other words, the good fruit you and I, Jesus’ disciples, bear is entering the kingdom of heaven (v. 21). (2) The good fruit we bear as disciples of Jesus is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Look at Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Among the fruit of the Holy Spirit, especially the disciples of Jesus bear abundant fruit of love, Jesus’ twofold commandment, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Lk. 10:27), so you can live the heavenly life. (3) The good fruit we bear is good deeds. Look at Ephesians 2:8-10: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God -- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

We have been saved through faith in Jesus by the total grace of God. This salvation never comes from us. This is a gift from God. We are newly created for good works in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we must do good works by the power of God’s grace. And we never boast of ourselves after we have done good deeds. Rather, we should confess that, even after we have done good, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty” (Lk. 17:10).

Look at Job 14:7 – “At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail.” I was strengthened and comforted by this word, ‘there is hope for a tree.’ And the lesson I received from God was that we should meditate on the words of Job 14:7, ‘there is hope for a tree,’ while looking at the tree that God the Creator made, no matter how much suffering we are in, like Job. Why does the tree have hope? The reason is because Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, died on the cross, which is the cursed tree. As a result, all our sins have been forgiven, and we have become “a good tree” in Christ Jesus. We have become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Therefore, as a good tree, we must bear the good fruit. As we bear the fruit of the Spirit, we must also

bear the fruit of good works. And finally, we must bear the fruit of eternal life. Until the day we all enter the kingdom of heaven, nothing and no one will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39).

The wise man who built his house on the rock

[Matthew 7:24-29]

If you live here in California, have you ever experienced an earthquake shaking your house or building? During the 1994 Northridge Earthquake (magnitude 6.7), my apartment building shook violently. At that time I was lying on the second floor in a bunker bed. I was amazed at how loud it vibrated. According to one Internet site, the Northridge earthquake in the United States did not appear in the list of the 10 most powerful earthquakes since the 20th century, but the Northridge earthquake ranked second in the disaster damage list (\$44 billion) (1st place was the Kobe earthquake in Japan, estimated property damage is \$100 billion) (Internet). If I share only two pieces of information, the most powerful earthquake since the 20th century was the earthquake in Chile in May 1960 with a magnitude of 9.5. The second and third places were the earthquakes in Alaska, USA (9.2 & 9.1). And the number one casualty caused by the earthquake was the earthquake in Indonesia in December 2004, with an estimated 250,000 deaths. The second and third places were earthquakes in China, with 242,000 and 180,000 people (Internet). According to Caltech Research Institute, there is a possibility of a mega earthquake in California within 20 years. They predicted that it could be a super-massive earthquake of 8.6 or greater, much more powerful than the expected 7.8. The Caltech Seismic Research Institute seems to have predicted it as a result of analysis of earthquake patterns in California over the past 100 years that in the next 20 years, the probability of a Big One with a magnitude of 7.0 degrees or higher will reach 80 to 90% (Internet). So, I once asked my younger brother in Christ, who is an architect, how California builds buildings in case of an earthquake. I remember he said that when they build a building, the foundation shakes when an earthquake occurs. It seems that the design method is referred to as seismic isolation design. The seismic isolation design is a structure that does not receive the force of an earthquake due to the cutting device between the building ground and the ground. It is designed to prevent the building from moving together by installing an isolator (a device that isolates noise and vibration, a rubber sandwiched between the foundation and a building to increase seismic resistance; assembled with metal and spring) or a damper [(reducing vibration of the machine) brakes]. It is designed so that the shaking or movement of the ground does not cause the building to move together by installing a damper, etc. and installing the building on it. However, the disadvantage of this design is that it is expensive. And it is said that the maintenance cost is high (Internet). When considering this seismic

isolation design, even if the cost is high and the maintenance cost is high, I think it is worth it in preparing for the big earthquake to come. Likewise, even if something that shakes us up like a great earthquake suddenly comes in our lives in the future, if we build and solidify the foundation of our faith according to God's design, we will never collapse.

As we meditate on Matthew 7:13-23, we received the lesson that Jesus gives us from “two doors” (vv. 13-14) and “two animals” (v. 15) and also “two trees” (vv. 16-23). If we reflect on the lesson we received, first, we must enter through the narrow gate (v. 13). The reason is because the narrow gate is the gate that leads to life (v. 14). We should never walk on the broad road that many people enter. The reason is because the broad road leads to the wide gate that leads to destruction (v. 13). Although the road that enters the small gate is narrow (v. 14) and there will be hardships, persecutions, and tribulations, we must strive to enter through that gate. Second, we must beware and wary of the false prophets (v. 15). The reason is because the false prophets are outwardly dressed in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves (v. 15). Third, as a good tree, we must bear good fruit (v. 17). The good tree can never bear bad fruit (v. 18). And the bad tree can never bear good fruit (v. 18). Jesus made it clear: “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” We must bear the fruit of eternal life, the fruit of the Spirit (the fruit of love), and the fruit of good deeds. And by no means will we ever be the only words, ‘Lord, Lord.’ Rather, we should become all who do the will of our Father who is in heaven (v. 21).

In this way, Jesus gave us the valuable lessons through “two gates”, “two animals” and “two trees.” Today, Jesus is talking about “two builders” in Matthew 7:24-29. As we meditate on those two builders, we want to receive the lessons Jesus gives us.

First, the first builder Jesus is talking about is “a wise man.”

Look at Matthew 7:24 – “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.” The wise man Jesus is talking about here refers to the wise builder who builds his house on the rock. Why did Jesus say that a man who builds his house on a rock is a wise man? The reason is because when he builds a house, he puts its foundation on a rock (v. 25). Do you know what is usually the first thing to do when building a hanok (traditional Korean house with wood-frame construction)? That's just laying the foundation stone or a cornerstone. Here, the foundation stone means a stone that stands under a pillar. When all the pillars are laid, the pillars are erected directly on the foundation stones. After that, it is said that they build the house by holding the the pillars. However, it is said that there is one process that must be passed when erecting a pillar on the cornerstone. It's called ‘Grezyl Method.’ It is making out a pillar around its bottom with a gauge for chiseling. Since natural stones are usually used for foundation stones, it is difficult to straighten the pillars no matter how wide and flat the stone is chosen. So in order to build a column on top of the cornerstone, you have to do the line work so that the face of the cornerstone and the face of the column fit well. The Grezyl's method is said to be simple. It is to cut and grind the face of the pillar erected on the foundation stone to match the

foundation stone. Instead of touching the foundation stone, the face of the pillar built on it is always cut and polished to fit the pillar. The criterion is always the cornerstone, not the pillar. And if you do it well, it is said that the better you do it, the safer and stronger your house will be (Internet). In the same way, the wise builder puts his plinth on the rock (v. 24). So, what is “the rock” Jesus is talking about here? When we think of “the rock”, the concept that comes to mind is ‘solid, strong’. And actually, the figuratively meaning of “the rock” that Jesus speaks of in today’s text is ‘firmness’ or ‘stability’ (Zodhiates). That is why Jesus said to the Apostle Peter in Matthew 16:18, “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” The meaning of this word is that the church is the church of Jesus, and the spiritual foundation of that church is Jesus, the rock. One thing we need to point out here is the meaning of the name “Peter.” We know the name's meaning mainly as "rock". But in fact it means "isolated stone" (Friberg) rather than rock. Therefore, metaphorically, “the rock” refers to Jesus (Friberg). Look at 1 Corinthians 10:4 – “and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.” The Apostle Paul referred to the water that Moses and the Israelites drank together at the time of the Exodus as “the spiritual drink.” Also he referred to the “rock” as “the spiritual rock,” and said that the rock was “Christ.” Therefore, in today's text, Matthew 7:24-25, the rock on which the wise man that Jesus is talking about builds a house refers to Jesus himself.

How, then, does the wise builder build his house on the rock? This is what Jesus is saying in Matthew 7:24a – “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them” In other words, the wise builder listens to the words of Jesus and does them in order to build his house on the rock. What is “these words of Mine” that Jesus is talking about here? Look at Matthew 7:28-29: “When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.” In other words, Jesus' "these words of Mine" can be narrowly said to be Matthew 7:1-23, but more broadly, it refers to Matthew chapters 5 through 7. This is called the Sermon on the Mount. In other words, these are the words that Jesus gave to his disciples and the multitude of followers on a mountain near the Sea of Galilee in the early days of his ministry. These words (teachings) of Jesus are not like their scribes, but like the one who has authority (7:29). Those who hear the words (teachings) of Jesus and put them into practice are the wise man who builds his house on the rock. This is spiritual Grezyl. The spiritual Grezyl is none other than living a life of living according to the word of the Lord, who is our rock (v. 24) (Internet). In other words, the spiritual Grezyl is not just crying out, “Lord, Lord,” but doing the will of our Heavenly Father (v. 21). The important thing here is that the standard in our lives is the Lord and the Lord's will, just as the standard is the cornerstone, not the pillar, in building a house. It means that we should not conform the Lord’s will to our will, but our will to the Lord’s will, just as the cornerstone should not conform to the pillar, but the pillar should conform to the cornerstone. The reason is because as disciples of Jesus (“the good tree”), we are only living according to the will of the Lord. That is why we must diligently lay down our will in front of the cross and pray that the Lord will build up the Church, the body of the Lord, according to His will.

In the Lord's establishment of His church, we must all listen to the words that come out of the mouth of Jesus, who is the rock, and obey them. We must not hear and do what the false prophets says since they are

hypocrites who enter through the wide gate and who are outwardly in sheep's clothing and inwardly ravenous wolves. Rather, we must strive to enter through the narrow gate by believing in Jesus, who is the door of the sheep (Jn. 10:7), and listen to the words of Jesus, who is the true prophet, and put them into practice. By hearing Jesus' words and putting them into practice, what is the result when the church is built on the rock? Look at Matthew 7:25 – “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.” What does it mean? When we hear and act on the words of Jesus, we can build God's house, the church, the body of the Lord, on the rock. At that time, no matter how much rain, floods, and winds blow against the church, the house of God built on the rock will never be destroyed (v. 25).

Second, the second builder Jesus is talking about is “a foolish man.”

Look at Matthew 7:26 – ““Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.” The foolish man Jesus is talking about here refers to the foolish builder who builds his house on the sand. Why did Jesus say that a person who builds his house on the sand is the foolish man? The reason is because the foolish builder built his house, and laid its foundation on the sand, not on the rock. Can you imagine? Which builder builds his house, and will lay the foundation of his house on sand? It is suicidal. Why? It is because when it rains and the floods come and the wind blows and slams against that house, the house built on the sand will fall greatly (v. 27). Then who is the foolish man? Who is the foolish builder? It is the one who hears these words of Jesus and does not act on them (v. 26). Isn't it interesting that both the wise and the foolish builders hear the words of Jesus, but the wise builder hears and acts, whereas the foolish builder hears and does not act. At the time of Jesus, who heard the words of Jesus and did not act? Were they not the Pharisees, the religious leaders of that time? They were the ones who built their houses on the sand. In other words, they denied the truth that they were saved by believing in Jesus and believed that they could be saved by keeping the law which was deceiving themselves. In other words, the Pharisees depended on self-righteousness, not on Jesus' righteousness. And they believed that they could be saved by their own merits. Such belief is vain and it is like sand. That's why it's bound to collapse. It will fall apart, will inevitably break down badly.

We should never, like the Pharisees, depend on our own merits or our righteousness. Rather, we must rely solely on the merits of Jesus on the cross. We are the ones for whom all our sins have been forgiven only through the merits of the cross of Jesus. In this way, we are justified in the sight of God through the righteousness of Jesus. Therefore, our salvation is the gift of God, which is graciously given to us through Jesus alone. Therefore, we must stand firm on the word of Jesus, who is the Rock. We must stand firm on the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we must obey the gospel of Jesus Christ and live a life worthy of the gospel. We must all become wise people who hear the words of Jesus and act on them. Then, no matter what tribulation and adversity may come in our lives, the house built on the rock will never fall.

I want you to remember the promises the Lord gave to our church once again. That promise is in Matthew 16:18: "... I ... will build my church " Our church is the Lord's church. And the Lord has promised us that He Himself will establish the body of the Lord, the Church. We who participate in the work that the Lord has established, we must hold onto this promise and believe that the Lord, our Rock, who gave this promise, is a faithful God. Not only do we believe, we must go further and praise our God by faith: "ASCRIBE GREATNESS to our God, the Rock, His work is perfect and all His ways are just. Ascribe greatness to our God, the Rock, His work is perfect and all His ways are just. A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Good and upright is He; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Good and upright is He" ("ASCRIBE GREATNESS to our God"). And we must hear the words of the Lord and act on them. Look at the verse 1 and the chorus of the hymn "Those Who Hear and Do the Word": "Those who hear and do the word Of the Master ever, Build a house on solid rock, To be shaken never. When the rains, and floods appall, All the tempests' fury Cannot shake it, standing tall, On the rock, securely. Build we well, Build to last, Build our house together; On the Rock of Ages, fast, Build to stand forever!" I hope and pray that you and I will build the Lord's church well.

A man of faith whom Jesus even marvels

[Matthew 8:5-13]

Are you walking by faith or by sight? In 2 Corinthians 5:7, the Bible tells us: “for we walk by faith, not by sight.” But in reality, even though we try to live by faith, many times when we look back at ourselves, we realize that we are living by sight rather than by faith. In other words, we are sensitive to what we see rather than living day by day with faith in the invisible God. Why do we live like that? The reason is because our faith is weak. However, it is not only us who are weak in faith. In the Bible, Jesus said this about the faith of his disciples: “You of little faith!” (Mt.6:30; 8:26; 16:8; Lk.12:28), “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Mt.14:31), “Because of the littleness of your faith” (17:20), “Where is your faith?” (Lk.8:25), “Do you still have no faith?” (Mk.4:40), “He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart” (16:14), “do not be unbelieving, but believing” (Jn.20:27). Looking at these Bible verses, we can see that Jesus did not praise the faith of his disciples. Rather, Jesus rebuked the disciples for their faith. Isn't it surprising that even the disciples of Jesus who witnessed the miracles performed by Jesus rebuked them because they had little faith and lived as those without faith? If so, have you ever thought about it this way? ‘Is Jesus rebuking you weak faith or lack of faith?’

However, in today's text, Matthew 8:5-13, we find a man of faith that Jesus was also marveled at. This man of faith was none other than a centurion who led 100 Roman troops living in Capernaum (v. 5). Look at Matthew 8:10 – “Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.” Today, as I meditate on the faith of this Roman centurion, whose faith that Jesus was also marveled, in two ways, I want to receive the lessons the Lord gives us. Therefore, I hope and pray that we all become people of faith like the centurion whose faith that Jesus is also marveled.

First, the man of faith whom Jesus even marvel asks God and receives answers to his prayer.

Look at Matthew 8:5-7: “And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, and saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented.’ Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’” The Roman army centurion living in this Capernaum had an earnest prayer request. That earnest prayer

request was for his servant who was suffering from paralysis to be healed. Why would this Roman centurion so desperately want his paralyzed servant to be healed? To find the answer, we have to look at Luke 7:1-10, which is similar to today's text Matthew 8:5-13, especially Luke 7:2 – “And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.” The reason why the Roman army centurion desperately wanted his paralyzed servant, who was on the verge of death, to be healed is because he loved that servant. Perhaps this servant was a Jew. The reason I think so is because in Luke 7:5, when the Roman army centurion heard the news of Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Jesus (v. 3) to ask Jesus earnestly and this was what the Jewish elders said to Jesus: “for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue” (v. 5). In other words, these Jewish elders said that the Roman army centurion even though he was a Roman, loved the Jewish people and even built a synagogue for them. The centurion who loved the Jews so much, when the author Luke used to describe the sick and dying servant who worked as his servant in his house as “a centurion’s slave, who was highly regarded,” we can imagine that the slave was a Jew. When we think of this Roman centurion, don't we remember the fifth word of blessing among Jesus' eight words of blessing that we have already meditated on, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Mt. 5:7) The Roman army centurion who shared suffering with his beloved servant when he was sick and about to die due to paralysis and was merciful to his servant who was of a lower rank than himself and could leave him alone to die. He was good to his servant. The centurion, having compassion on his servant, not only sought Jesus to save him from disease and death, but also asked Jesus to heal his servant. If this is not what mercy is, what would it be?

When I think of this Roman centurion who showed mercy to the Jews, I was reminded of the movie "Schindler's List" that I saw long time ago. Directed by the famous Steven Spielberg in 1993, this inspiring war-human drama film tells the story of Oskar Schindler, an opportunist German businessman who pursues his own success on the bandwagon in a German-occupied Polish town during World War II by taking over the bowl factory. He uses all sorts of methods, including becoming a Nazi member and bribing German troops to take over the factory. However, Schindler, a ruthless opportunist, begins to hear his conscience over the brutal genocide of the Jews as he becomes acquainted with Stern, a Jewish accountant. And finally, he is determined to rescue the Jews who will be taken to concentration camps to die. He plans to rescue Jews by bribing German officers for the number of people they pull out, and together with Stern, he creates a list of Jews to be rescued, the so-called Schindler's List. And he finally saves 1,100 Jews (Internet). I remember at that time, after the movie was over, there was actually a scene interviewing Jews who were actually included in Schindler's List and survived. Watching that scene, I wondered how grateful those surviving Jews would be to Schindler, a German who had already died. Isn't it ironic that another German rescued them from the point of view of the Jews who suffered and were killed by German troops in war? Why did a German named Schindler rescue 1,100 Jews? Why did Schindler, a German businessman who was a success-seeking opportunist, change his mind and risk saving the Jews rather than earning money? The centurion in today's text, Matthew 8, was a Roman, but he loved the Jewish people, the people of the country conquered and ruled by Rome. This fact was also known and acknowledged by the Jewish elders (Lk.7:5). Because the Roman army centurion loved his servant who was sick and was about to die (v. 2), he heard the news of Jesus and sent some

Jewish elders to Jesus, earnestly asking him to heal his servant (v. 3). Hearing the petition, Jesus said, "I will come and heal him" (Mt.8:7). In the end, this Roman army centurion received Jesus' answer to his plea.

Like this Roman army centurion, have you ever seen a loved one suffering from a disease and prayed earnestly to God for healing? Even when a loved one of your family died of a disease, didn't you cry out earnestly to God for help? What was the voice of the Lord that we longed for as we cried out to Heavenly Father at that time? Wasn't it "I will come and heal him"? (v. 7) At that time, when our loved one seem to be getting better from their diseases, we think that God hears our prayers and heals us. So we feel good and give thanks to God. But if our loved one's health seems to be deteriorating, we get discouraged, thinking that God is not healing our loved one. When we are so discouraged, we remember the words of Jesus in Luke 18 where we should always pray and not lose heart (Lk. 18:1), and like the widow in the parable, we should pray to our Father God persistently without giving up, even to the point of bothering Him. And yet, how did we feel when things didn't go as we had hoped and prayed for, and a loved one of our family died? In the midst of sorrow and despair, our hearts are so troubled that we weep and weep. How should we respond when the loved one of our family dies due to suffering from an illness despite our earnest praying to God? Maybe we can blame God. And we may even think that God hates us and takes the one we love so much. However, some people are thankful to God because they experience God's amazing love even in the midst of a great crisis in their lives. Through the death of the loved one, there are those who come to understand a little bit more about the heart of God the Father who experienced the death of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Isn't it a little ironic that we come to understand God's love more deeply and broadly through the death of our loved one?

There are three things we should keep in mind when we earnestly pray to God for the loved one who suffers from an illness: (1) We should focus our prayers on God, the object of our prayers, not on the content of our prayers, our loved one suffering from disease. Look at the first half of Hebrews 12:2 in the Bible: "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith," Although we know that when we pray, we should look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, many times we tend to see our loved one suffering from disease before us rather than looking to the Lord, the object of our prayers. But we must overcome our tendency to do so by looking and praying only to the Lord and perfecter of our faith. (2) When we pray, we should pray with faith, not with our eyes. Look at 2 Corinthians 5:7 – "for we walk by faith, not by sight." Even though we have heard this verse many times and know it well, when we see a loved one suffering from a disease every day, there are countless times when we are led by the circumstance we see rather than praying to God in faith. Then, when things seem to be getting better, we feel happy and thankful. But when things seem to be getting worse, we often feel anxious and have a hard time in discouragement. Therefore, we need to focus on God and ask in faith, knowing and believing that God is God. (3) When we pray to God for the loved one who suffers from disease, we should pray for the glory of God to be manifested. Look at 1 Corinthians 10:31 – "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." When we pray to God, we often seek the Lord's will. But our concern is that the loved one is suffering from a disease or is even dying, and we have no way of knowing whether the Lord's will is for him to live or die.

Therefore, when we ask God, we should pray for God's glory to be manifested rather than praying for the Lord's will. The reason is because the Bible says, "Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, do it all for the glory of God" (v. 31). I think the word "whatever we do" here means to pray for the glory of God, even if the one we love is dying from a disease. What are the prayer topics that you earnestly pray to Heavenly Father? Are you earnestly praying for a loved one who is suffering from an illness? Are you earnestly praying for the salvation of the souls of your loved ones? Hopefully, like the centurion in today's text, I hope and pray in the name of Jesus that you will receive answers to your prayers by asking God in faith.

Second and last, the man of faith whom Jesus even marvels is he who believes in the power of the Word of God.

Look at today's text Matthew 8:8 – "But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed." This word of the centurion was what he said to Jesus (v. 8) after Jesus heard the news of the centurion's servant and said, "I will come and heal him" (v. 7). In Luke 7:6-7, which is similar to today's text Matthew 8:8, the author Luke says: "Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, 'Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.'" Matthew records that the centurion spoke to Jesus directly, whereas Luke records that he spoke to Jesus through his friends whom he sent by to Jesus. What is important here is not whether the centurion spoke to Jesus himself or through his friends, but what he said. The centurion said that he was not worthy of Jesus coming into his house (Mt. 8:8a). What did he mean? Why did the centurion say that he was not worthy of Jesus coming into his house? According to Pastor John MacArthur, the reason was because the Roman army centurion knew the Jewish tradition that when a Jew entered a Gentile's house, was consciously defiled, and he was afraid that Jesus might think that the Gentiles would feel uncomfortable because of him (MacArthur). I think this is a reasonable interpretation. But I think the reason the centurion said to Jesus, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my house" was because he did not think he was worthy to have the Lord in his house. How can we know that? In today's text verse 8, the Bible says, "I am not worthy" In fact, if we look at the original Greek, it means 'I do not fit' or 'I am not worthy' (Friberg). In fact, looking at the first half of Luke 7:7, Luke wrote: "for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You" What does it mean? It means that the centurion does not even have the right to have Jesus in his house. Another occurrence of this word is in John 1:27 – "It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." What does it mean? Doesn't it mean that John the Baptist has neither the right to untie the laces of Jesus' shoes? When I think of this centurion's word, I think the third of the blessing of Jesus that we have already meditated on comes to mind: "Blessed are the meek... " (Mt. 5:5). In other words, the centurion who said to Jesus, 'Lord, I am not worthy that you come into my house' is a meek man and a humble man. That is, I think he was a man who knew who he was before the Lord. That's why he said, " Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof" (8:8). He claimed to be a lowly person who could not face Jesus personally (Lk. 7:7) (Park).

Are we worthy? Do we deserve to have Jesus in our house? I personally like 2 Corinthians 3:5 – “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.” When my heart is heavy as I ponder over why God made me the head of a family and the pastor of a church, even though I do not have the qualifications myself, I am very lacking. But when I think about this 2 Corinthians 3:5, I gain strength again. The reason is because even if I lack qualifications and lack everything, only God can make up for my shortcomings. That is why I pray that I will humbly rely on the Lord and carry on my family and church ministry. The second thing the centurion said to Jesus was that his servant would be healed if Jesus just say the word (Mt. 8:8b). Although this centurion had clearly received the answer to his prayer, “I will come and heal him” (v. 7), he could not afford Jesus to come into his house, and he did not want Jesus to trouble himself more (Lk. 7:6) He believed that his servant would be healed of a deathly disease if he just spoke the word (v. 7). When Jesus heard the centurion's words, he was marveled. Why did Jesus marvel? It was because of the centurion's faith. Why is the centurion's faith amazing? The reason was that he believed in the power of the Word of God. He believed that if Jesus just spoke, his servant would be healed of his sickness. This centurion acknowledged the authority of the Lord's Word and submitted himself under it. So he said this in today's text Matthew 8:9 – “For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it.” What does it mean? Even the Roman army centurion had a higher rank than him, a commander of thousands, but he also had 100 soldiers below him, so if he gave orders to them, they would obey him. In the end, the key point that the centurion wanted to tell Jesus here is that he believes that if Jesus only commands (words), anything will surely be accomplished (Park). It is a sign of faith that, if the Lord speaks, his servant will be healed of a dying disease. And according to his conviction and faith, when the Lord said, “Go, it shall be done for you as you have believed,” the servant was healed that very moment (v. 13).

At least once in our lives, we've all seen a loved one suffer from an illness. At that time, didn't our compassion for our loved one ignite when they were afflicted with disease and suffering? At that time, we humbly knelt on our knees and prayed to God that our loved one would be healed (Jam. 5:16). At that time, we prayed to God, who is in charge of life and death, for the person we love, and while we prayed to leave the results to God, we earnestly prayed that God would heal and save the loved one rather than die of disease. As a result, there are some people who have loved ones who have been healed (or some who have had their lives extended) as their prayers have been answered, but there are also those who have died. I think of two people I personally love with Christ's love. One is my first baby, Charis. She eventually fell asleep in my arms. I really wanted to go to church and worship together with her, and to hear her crying. So I earnestly prayed to God. But she ended up dead. At that time, even though my wife and I cried, we experienced the love of the Lord who died on the cross for a sinner like me through the death of our baby Charis more deeply and more broadly. I couldn't help but praise with an overflowing heart how wonderful and amazing His saving love was. Another is my father-in-law. What I still remember is that during a sabbatical month, while staying at my father-in-law and mother-in-law's house for a week, I took the two of them to the hospital and checked my father-in-law's health. I remember him being diagnosed with lung cancer and being told by the doctor that he would only have about 6 months to live. At that time, I sang a

hymn to my father-in-law lying in bed, and while reading the Bible, I remember asking him a question: 'Father, aren't you afraid of death?' At that time, my father-in-law said that he was not afraid. Instead, when he praised, read, and especially prayed, he said "Amen" vigorously when I prayed for the Lord's grace for salvation, lifelong gratitude, and thanks in all circumstances. Even after, sometimes, when my mother-in-law calls me and asks me to pray for my father-in-law on the phone, I pray the same prayer, and my father-in-law says "Amen". Even my father-in-law has been diagnosed with lung cancer and has been living with an extension of 3 years after hearing the doctor's word that he will only have 6 months to live. Let's ask God for the sake of those we love who are in sickness and suffering. Let us all pray in faith. Let's pray to God with complete trust and dependence on God. Let's all entrust all the results of prayer answers to God and pray to Him with faith in the power of God's Word. Let's all pray to God in faith so that only God's glory can be manifested.

‘Your sins are forgiven’

[Matthew 9:1-8]

How do you view The Problem of Pain and Suffering? The Bible Isaiah 38:17 talks about pain and suffering like this: “Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.” The Bible says that the great pain and suffering that God allows us is to give us peace. I don't quite understand. How can we find peace through great pain and suffering? It is none other than that, God makes us to repent all our sins through great suffering (vv. 2-3, 5) so that He can put all our sins behind His back and gives us peace. Why is God doing this? The reason is because God loves us (v. 17). C. S. Lewis, in his book “The Problem of Pain,” says that the problem of pain is deeply related to the problem of permanent (continued) human sin. At the same time, he says that human beings are freed from the illusion that everything is going well through pain, and this is the primary spiritual legacy of suffering. And the ultimate goal of human beings through suffering is to break all subjective wills that humans can do as they please. At this time, God's will is for humans to realize that they lack through suffering and to seek better things to discover. The important thing is that the complete surrender of self to God is painful (Internet). What do you think of this C. S. Lewis statement? What I agree with with regards to today's text is that the problem of pain and suffering is deeply related to the problem of our continued sin.

In today's text, Matthew 9:2, we see Jesus speaking to a paralytic who was lying on the bed like this: “Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.’” Focusing on this word today, I would like to receive a lesson from God by thinking of the three types of people who appear in today's text under the title, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’

The first people I want to consider are the people who brought to Jesus the paralytic who was lying on the bed.

In today's text, Matthew 9:2, the author Matthew said that they were “Some men” who brought to Jesus a paralyzed man lying on a bed. If we go to Mark 2:3, Mark explains in more detail by saying that “Some men” were “four of them.” So, how does the Bible say that these four men brought the paralytic to Jesus? In Matthew 8:2, the

author Matthew says that some men brought the paralytic who was lying on the bed. In Luke 5:18, the author Luke says that the four men carried the paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. Further, Luke says that the four men tried to bring this paralytic man on the mat before Jesus, but could not find a way to carry him “because of the crowd” (v. 19). The word “because of the crowd” here can be understood a little bit better by looking at Mark 2:2 – “So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.” In other words, even though the four men, carrying the paralyzed man lying on the bed, brought him to the house where Jesus was (Mk. 2:1) and wanted to bring him and lay him before Jesus (Lk. 5:18), they could not because there was no room left due to so many gathered (Mk. 2:2). What these four men did at that time was that they went up to the roof, removed the tiles, and lowered the paralyzed man on the bed in front of Jesus in the midst of the crowd (Lk. 5:19). This is what Mark says in Mark 2:4 – “Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.” What kind of roof did the house where the Jews lived, so that the four men could take the roof off and digged through it and let the paralytic go down? When laying the roofs of Jewish houses, it is said that the first girders were arranged at regular intervals. It is said that small pieces of wood were placed densely on top of it, and the tangled thorns were thickly laid on top of it. It is said that after plastering it and covering it on thorns, it was compacted flat with soil again. It is said that because the roof was made in this way, people could easily tear it off by hand (Internet). At that time, Jesus saw the faith of these four people (Mt. 9:2; Mk. 2:5; Lk. 5:20). Perhaps these four men as well as the paralytic had the same faith. What kind of faith did these four people really have? We can think of it in three ways:

(1) The faith of these four people was the faith that the Lord's power to heal was with Jesus.

Look at Luke 5:17 – “One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.” There is no record in today's Gospel of Matthew, but in Luke 5:17 it is written, “the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.” Of course, there is no record in the Bible that these four men who came to Jesus with the paralyzed man on a bed directly witnessed Jesus healing the sick people. But at least we can guess that they had heard that Jesus had healed many sick people, so they came to Jesus with the paralytic on a bed. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say that these four men did not only hear the word of Jesus and brought the paralyzed man to Jesus, but Jesus clearly saw their faith. This means that the four men did not only bring the paralyzed man to Jesus after hearing about him, but because they believed that the Lord's power to heal was also with him (Lk. 5:17).

Shouldn't we have this kind of faith? Maybe now, many Christians who hear a rumor that a pastor who leads a revival meeting has the gift of healing, then they are eager to attend that meeting. To be honest, I wonder if those people come to Jesus with faith in the Lord's power to heal just like the four people in today's text, or they just have earnest hope that the person they love will be healed. Also, I don't know

whether they believe in the healing power of the Lord or the power of the pastor who leads the revival meeting. We need to ask ourselves the question: 'Do I really believe that the power of the Lord to heal is with Jesus, or do I know that the Lord will heal my loved one who is suffering from an illness?' Although the two questions look similar, they are different. The focus of the first question is on Jesus, who has the Lord's power, and the focus of the second question is on myself, longing for my loved one to be healed. Think about it. When we pray earnestly for a loved one who is suffering from a disease, we do not know whether the will of the Lord is healed or not when we pray, 'I believe He will heal you.' So, while earnestly praying for healing, we should pray, 'Not my will, but Your will be done' and pray, 'Whether it is healed or not, only God's glory will be manifested'.

(2) The faith of these four men was faith in the word of Jesus.

Look at Mark 2:2 – “So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.” When they heard the news that Jesus had come to Capernaum and he had come home (v. 1), a large crowd had gathered and there was no place to even enter the front door (v.2). Here, what is “the word” that Jesus preached? Presumably, “the word” that Jesus spoke to the large crowd in that house is “the gospel of God” and “the kingdom of God” (Black). Look at Mark 1:14-15: “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’” These four people believed this very gospel of God and the word of Jesus about the kingdom of God, so by faith they came to Jesus with the paralytic on a bed.

What does it mean to believe in the word of the kingdom of God? What was the concept of the kingdom of God that Jesus had in mind when he spoke about the kingdom of God? A Bible verse that explains the concept is found in Luke 10:9 – “Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'” Also, look at Luke 9:2 – “and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” When we look at these words, we cannot help but get the impression that they have to do with the kingdom of God and healing the sick, as Jesus had envisioned. In other words, the concept of the kingdom of God that Jesus had in mind had the work of healing the sick and making them whole. Therefore, when these four men came to Jesus with the paralyzed man on a bed, they not only believed that the power of the Lord to heal the sick was with Him (Lk. 5:17), but they also believed that Jesus, who was speaking the gospel of God and the kingdom of God was the King in the kingdom of God. How precious is this faith? Shouldn't we also have this faith in Jesus as the King in the kingdom of God? When we praise our God, the King, with faith, and come to the King in faith, shouldn't we also believe that God will heal us and make us whole?

(3) The faith of these four men was a faith with works and a living faith.

As we had already thought, these four men, carrying the paralyzed man lying on the bed, brought him to the house where Jesus was (Mk. 2:1) and wanted to bring him before Jesus (Lk. 5:18). But there was no room to even enter the front door (Mk. 2:2). So they went up to the roof, made an opening in the roof above Jesus, made a hole (the tiles were removed) and lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on into the midst of the crowd before Jesus (Lk. 5:19; Mk. 2:4). They not only believed that Jesus had the power of the Lord to heal (Lk. 5:17) and that Jesus was the King in the kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14-15, 2:2; Lk. 9:2, 10:9), they acted according to that faith. To bring the paralyzed man on a bed before Jesus, they climbed up to the roof of the house where Jesus was staying, tore the roof down, made a hole in the roof, and lowered the paralyzed man on the bed in front of Jesus. This reminds me the Bible James 2:14 and 17: “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ... In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” Obviously, the Apostle James said that faith without works is itself dead. If we only say we have faith and do not act by faith, our faith without works is dead faith and not the faith that can save us. However, the faith of these four men in Matthew 9:1-8 was by no means dead. Rather, their faith was a living faith and a faith with works. The Apostle James describes their faith in James 2:22 – “You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.” In other words, the faith of these four men was the faith that was perfected by works. I hope and pray that we can have this kind of faith too. I hope and pray that we have this faith that is perfected by works so that we can be healed by faith and that we can be victorious through faith.

The second person we would like to consider is the paralytic lying on a bed.

In today's text, Matthew 9:1, it is said that Jesus got into the boat and crossed over and came to his own town. Here, his town is Capernaum (Mk. 2:1). In Mark 2:1 Mark says, “A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum.” Why did Mark use the word “again” here? This is because, as we have already meditated on in Matthew 8:5-13, Jesus was already in Capernaum before, the place where he healed the beloved servant of the Roman centurion who was dying of paralysis. But now, Jesus came to Capernaum again. And there, Jesus met another paralytic. When I think of these two encounters, it seems that there were many paralytics even in Jesus' day. But I wondered what was the cause of the paralysis and why there were so many paralytics. The paralytic disease, as we know it, is a brain disease. In other words, it is a disease that causes paralysis of the body because an abnormality occurs or bursts in a blood vessel in the brain, preventing it from performing some functions of the brain (Internet). We mainly understand this disease as a state of paralysis of the body due to cerebral hemorrhage or cerebral infarction. In modern medical science, there are three causes of cerebral hemorrhage/cerebral infarction: (1) When a blood vessel in the brain is blocked due to arteriosclerosis, (2) Cerebral blood vessel ruptures due to high blood pressure, stress, etc., (3) A blood clot from another part of the body travels into the bloodstream and blocks a blood vessel in the brain (Internet). Among these three causes, for some reason, the second cause comes to my mind: “Cerebral blood vessel ruptures due to high blood pressure, stress, etc.” Perhaps the reason is that one of my friends had two cerebral hemorrhages due to high blood pressure and stress. Interestingly, the Bible does not say that the

cause of the paralytic's illness in Matthew 9:2 is a medical reason, but a spiritual reason. What is that spiritual reason? It is because of his sins. Look at the second half of Matthew 9:2 – "... Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." Isn't that a bit strange? When Jesus healed the sick, He said this. When Jesus healed a leper, he reached out and touched him, and said, "I am willing," "Be clean." Immediately the leper was cleansed of leprosy (Mt. 8:3). And when the Roman centurion's servant was healed of paralysis, Jesus said, "'Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.'" And immediately the servant was healed (v. 13). Also, the Bible records that when Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever, Jesus touched her and the fever went away (v. 15). And even when people brought many demon-possessed people, Jesus drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick (v.16). However, while healing the paralytic in Matthew 9:1-8, Jesus said that the paralytic's sins were forgiven. Isn't that a bit strange? As Jesus said in verse 5 of today's text, Jesus could have said, "Get up and walk," but why did he say, "Your sins are forgiven"? (v. 2) The reason is because the paralytic's sickness was acquired through his sin. So, before Jesus healed the paralytic, he forgave the sin that was the cause of the paralytic.

There is a connection between our sickness and our sins. Of course, we cannot say that all diseases are due to our sins. But the Bible clearly states that certain diseases are related to our sins. A good example is the story of the 38-year-old sick man in John 5. After healing the 38-year-old sick man (Jn. 5:8), Jesus met him in the temple and said, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you" (v. 14). What does it mean? Isn't this saying that he should never sin again so that he doesn't get more serious? It is taught that the 38-year-old sick man's illness was the result of his sin. Dr. Yoon-sun Park said: 'The ultimate cause of disease is sin. Without sin, there would be no disease in the world. In some diseases, sin may be the direct cause. Because of God's mercy, every sin does not directly cause a new illness. But if the same sin is piled up, it becomes the cause and disease occurs' (Park). Of course, not every sin directly causes disease. But if we keep committing the same sin and accumulate sin, disease will occur. Do you think the bitter fruit should be removed first or the bitter root should be removed first? We already know the answer. We know that no matter how much we remove the bitter fruit, unless we remove the bitter root, the bitter fruit will inevitably bear again and again. It reminds me of Hebrews 12:15 – "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." When a bitter root develops within us, we can not only trouble ourselves, but also defile many people. To that extent, the evil influence of sin can spread like an epidemic. Therefore, we first get rid of the root of bitterness in us. In doing so, the bitter fruit can also be automatically removed. For the paralytic in Matthew 9:1-8 in today's text, the root of bitterness was his sin. And his bitter fruit was paralysis. So, looking at the paralytic and the four men carrying him on a bed with faith, Jesus said, "Take heart, son, your sins are forgiven" (Mt.9:2).

After Jesus forgave the paralytic's sins (v. 5), He said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home" (v. 6). Then the paralytic got up and went home (v. 7), the Gospel of Matthew says. The Gospel of Mark says that he got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all (Mk. 2:12). The Gospel of Luke says that the man immediately stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God (Lk. 5:25). After all, Jesus first forgave the paralytic's sins and then healed him. Therefore the paralytic was made whole, took

his bed, and went back to his home, praising God in the presence of all men. The Bible James 5:16 says, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” We must pray for each other so that we may be healed of our sickness. But before that, we must first solve the problem of our sins. We must confess our sins and repent. We must humbly repent of our sins by faith, relying on the death and shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. Then, God will not only forgive our sins, but will also heal our sickness.

The third and last people we want to consider are the scribes and the Pharisees.

Look at Matthew 9:3 – “And some of the scribes said to themselves, ‘This fellow blasphemes.’” When Jesus said to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven” (v. 2), some scribes thought to themselves, “This fellow blasphemes” (v. 3; Mk.2:6). Luke 5:21 explains it in more detail: “The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?’” In other words, when Jesus said to the paralytic at the house of Capernaum, “Your sins are forgiven,” not only the scribes, but also the Pharisees who were with them thought in their hearts, “Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” (v. 21) In other words, the scribes and Pharisees thought that there was no one who could forgive sins except God. But when the carpenter's son, Jesus of Nazareth, said to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," from their point of view, Jesus committed the sin of blasphemy. Knowing that they were thinking like this in their hearts (Mk. 2:8), Jesus said to them, “‘Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?’” (Mt. 9:4) What does it mean? Now Jesus is saying that it was an evil thought for the scribes and Pharisees to think in their hearts that Jesus was blasphemy. Why were the thoughts of their hearts evil in the eyes of Jesus? The reason is because they are evil, and their mouths have spoken out of the abundance of their hearts. Look at Matthew 12:34-35: “You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil.” In other words, the scribes and Pharisees were evil in the eyes of Jesus. So they think evil out of the evil stored up in their hearts and speak evil things with their mouths. To the scribes and Pharisees who had such evil thoughts, Jesus said, “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (9:5-6a; cf.: Mk. 2:9-10a; Lk.5:23-24a). What this word of Jesus is telling us is that the scribes and Pharisees, who thought in their hearts that Jesus had committed the sin of blasphemy, did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, so they couldn’t believe that Jesus had power to forgive sins which only God had. In other words, since the scribes and Pharisees said they believed in God, but did not believe that Jesus was God, they thought in their hearts that Jesus blasphemed because Jesus said to the paralytic “your sins are forgiven.” Isn’t that a bit funny? Isn’t it a bit absurd that they did not realize the sin of not believing that Jesus was the Son of God and thought (condemned with their hearts) that Jesus committed the sin of blasphemy out of such ignorance and unbelief? That is why Jesus said to them, “But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (Mt. 9:6). That is, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven” (v. 2), and set him free from his sins, so that he might know that he is the Messiah and God the Son, having the power to

forgive sins. At the same time, Jesus was rebuking the scribes and Pharisees for their unbelief, that is, the sin of not believing that Jesus was God.

After that, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home” (v. 6). And the paralyzed man immediately got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God (v. 7; Mk. 2:12; Lk. 5:25). He was not only forgiven of his sins, but his sickness was also healed. What was the reaction of the crowd when they saw it? Look at Matthew 9:8, Mark 2:12 and Luke 5:26: “But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men” (Mt. 9:8), “... This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!’” (Mk. 2:12), “They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, ‘We have seen remarkable things today’” (Lk. 5:26). In the end, many people who had gathered at the Capernaum house were amazed by Jesus' power to forgive sins and to heal people, and they glorified God.

O. J. Gibson, in his book “Survey in Basic Christianity,” asks a self-checklist of seven questions (Internet): (1) Have you always been unselfish? (2) Were you always free from envy and covetousness? (3) Have you certainly done all the good you are capable of? (4) Have you always been kind to everyone? (5) Have you always loved God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? (6) Have you always loved others as yourself? (7) Have you always been perfect like the Lord Jesus Christ? And he says: 'If the answer to any of these questions is "No," then the Bible says you are a sinner. If you keep the whole law and break one, you are guilty of the whole (Jam. 2:10). Even one defilement of the perfect holiness of God makes him a sinner.’ God solved this problem of sin in Jesus Christ. God forgives all sins to those who believe in Jesus. If we come to Jesus by faith and realizing our sins even through the pain of disease, the Lord will tell us, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ I hope and pray that all of us will be forgiven of our sins by confessing our sins through faith in Jesus and repenting.

The sick in need of a doctor

[Matthew 9:9-13]

Are you healthy? As the saying goes that the older we get, the more we get sick here and there and suffer. And when we get sick, we go to the hospital. The reason is to see a doctor and cure our sickness. Perhaps none of you are in good health but deliberately go to the hospital to see a doctor. The phrase 'Birth, old age, sickness, and death', the four phrases of life, comes to mind. As we get older in our lives, it is unavoidable that our body becomes weaker, sick, and ill. So it seems that we all just want to live healthy and then leave this world. Naturally, if we are sick or have suffered from disease, we have no choice but to pay more attention to our health. And we often say, 'Health is the best' with our lips. However, I believe that physical health is important, but mental health is also important. The reason is because there are mentally unhealthy people around us. It seems that more and more people around us are suffering from mental illness. We feel sorry for people who suffer from mental illness that prevents them from adapting to social life due to abnormalities in their mental function and interferes with their daily life. Some people suffer from schizophrenia, with delusions and hallucinations, some with depressive disorder, some with manic depression, and so on. Therefore, we cannot help thinking that we must be mentally healthy. Furthermore, I believe that in addition to physical and mental health, what is truly important is the health of our souls that is spiritual health. The reason is that no matter how physically or mentally healthy a person may be, his soul may be ill. Here, to say that our soul is sick means that we are violating God's commandments and sinning against God in our spiritual life. And when we do not repent of our sins and our souls do not prosper in all things because of our sins, no matter how healthy our bodies and minds are, it is of no use. So today I want to bless you with the words of 3 John 1:2 – "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." I hope and pray that all of us are in good health, spiritually, physically and mentally.

In today's text, Matthew 9:12-13, Jesus says this: "On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" The background of these verses is as follows: Jesus forgave the sins of a paralytic in Capernaum and healed him. As he passed by, Jesus saw Levi the son of Alphaeus (Mk. 2:14), or a man named Matthew, sitting at the tax collector's booth (Mt. 9:9; Mk. 2:14; Lk. 5:27). When Jesus saw Matthew sitting at the

tax collector's booth and said to him, "Follow me" (Mt. 9:9; Mk. 2:14; Lk. 5:27), Matthew heard Jesus' call and got up from the tax collector's booth where he was sitting and followed Jesus (Mt. 9:9; Mk. 2:14). He left everything behind, and got up and followed Jesus (Lk. 5:28). Then Matthew (Levi) had a great banquet in his house for Jesus, who went to his house and sat down with many tax collectors and other followers of Jesus ("sinners") (Mk. 2:15) and his disciples (Lk. 5:29; Mt. 9:10) and ate food with them (Mt. 9:10). When the Pharisees saw this, they went to Jesus' disciples and asked them: "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'" (v. 11). Even the Pharisees and their scribes complained to Jesus' disciples (Lk. 5:30). Then Jesus listened to the Pharisees and said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt. 9:12-13; Mk. 2:17). If we look at Mark 2:17 and Luke 5:31-32, there are two differences from today's text Matthew 9:12-13: (1) One is that there is nothing in the Gospels of Mark and of Luke that says, "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'" (Mt. 9:13). (2) Another difference is that only Luke says in Luke 5:32, "... but sinners to repentance", which basically means that Jesus came to call sinners to repentance (Matthew and Marks just say "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." There is no such word "repentance"). What we need to think about here is who Jesus is referring to as "the healthy" and who is "the sick".

'The healthy' is "the righteous" Jesus spoke of in Matthew 9:13. And Jesus said he did not come to call the righteous. Here "the righteous" Jesus refers to are the Pharisees. Who were the Pharisees at the time of Jesus? They were people who pursued 'self-righteousness' by keeping the law of Moses. In other words, they were legalists who wanted to be justified by their works. So what kind of religious rites were they fervently engaged in? It was the sacrifice. They devoted their energy to offering sacrifices to God. In so doing, the Pharisees believed that they would take away their sins, and as a result they actually justified themselves. So, when we look at the parable of Jesus in which a Pharisee and a tax collector went up to the temple to pray in Luke 18, the Pharisee prayed to God while standing and praying about himself like this: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get" (Lk. 18:11-12). From the content of this prayer, we can see that this Pharisee considered himself righteous. That is why Jesus said in Luke 18:9, "To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable." The Pharisee considered the tax collector who prayed in the same temple as a sinner and despised him, so he said a prayer of thanks to God that he was not like the tax collector. But the tax collector prayed to God like this: "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner'" (v. 13). Unlike the Pharisees, the tax collector knew that he was a sinner. So he pleaded with God, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (v.13). After telling the parable of the prayers of these two men, Jesus concluded: "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (v. 14).

Could the countless sacrifices of the Pharisees be able to take away their sins? The Bible says in Hebrews 10:11 that every priest stood every day and offered the same sacrifice often, but this sacrifice could never take away

sins. Clearly, the Bible says that offering the same sacrifice again and again does not take away sins. But the Pharisees offered countless sacrifices to God, believing that the sacrifices would take away their sins, and as a result they considered themselves righteous. In today's text, Matthew 9:13, Jesus said to the Pharisees who considered themselves righteous, "I have not come to call the righteous." And Jesus said to them, "go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'" (v.13). Why did Jesus say this to the Pharisees? To answer this question, we must turn to Hosea 6:6 – "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." In other words, the reason why Jesus said to the Pharisees, "go and learn what this means, I desire mercy, not sacrifice" can be summed up in one word, that is Jesus wanted the Pharisees to lay down their will and obey the will of the Lord. Then what was the will of the Pharisees and what was the will of the Lord? The will of the Pharisees was to be justified by keeping the law. That is why they offered sacrifices so that their sins could be forgiven and they wanted to be justified. And they tried not to defile themselves by living separately from those they considered sinners. So when they saw Jesus eating at Matthew's house with tax collectors and sinners, they asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Mt. 9:11) But the will of the Lord was to understand that God did not want sacrifices or burnt offerings, but to acknowledge God and have mercy. Jesus wanted the Pharisees to obey the word of the Lord and show mercy to those whom they regarded as sinners, like Matthew. And Jesus said that in order for the Pharisees to learn the will of the Lord, they would forsake their own will and self-righteousness, and were justified by faith alone, and then were saved, so that they too could have mercy on tax collectors and sinners, just as the Lord had mercy on sinners like themselves. But the Pharisees not only did not want to learn Jesus after hearing the word, but they could not. This is because they considered themselves to be healthy and righteous. Jesus said that those who consider themselves to be healthy do not need a doctor, and He did not come to call those who consider themselves righteous (Mt. 9:12, 13).

Do you think that the Pharisees who wanted to be saved by works are healthy people who do not need a doctor? Are the Pharisees who pursued their own righteousness by keeping the law and doing it, in your view, are they truly righteous? In today's terms, are those who think that they will go to heaven because they do good (good deeds?) in your eyes are healthy and righteous people? They don't need a doctor, they don't need Jesus. The reason is not because they believe in Jesus, but because they believe that they are saved by good works. Such people depend not on the righteousness of Jesus (God), but on their own righteousness, not on the merits of Jesus' cross, but on their own merits. And such people consider themselves to be healthy and righteous. But in the eyes of the Lord, these are the true sick people and the true sinners.

So, who are "the sick" Jesus spoke of in Matthew 9:12? They are the "sinners" Jesus spoke of in verse 13. And Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." That is, Jesus came to call sinners to repentance (Lk. 5:32). The "sinners" Jesus spoke of here were Matthew, whom the Pharisees (and the scribes) spoke of, as well as many tax collectors and many followers of Jesus who sat and ate with Jesus in Matthew's house (v.29). The Pharisees considered them sinners. At that time, tax collectors like Matthew were the most despised in society. The money they collected from the people was often partly for personal gain (cf. Lk. 19:8) and partly were offered to

Rome. Therefore, they were regarded not only as thieves by the people of Israel, but also as traitors to the nation of Israel (MacArthur). Therefore, it is said that at that time, in Judea, the social status of tax collectors was very low, so they did not even want to marry the tax collector's house. And the Gentile had that stereotype to the extent that when someone said "What is the worst beast?" a man named Theocritus answered, 'In the mountains bears and lions, in the streets (markets) they are tax collectors (Park). But when Jesus saw Matthew the tax collector sitting at the tax collector's booth, he told him, "Follow me" (Mt. 9:9). At that time, Matthew immediately obeyed the Lord's call and left everything and got up and followed Jesus (Lk. 6:28). This shows Matthew's faith. How pleased Matthew must have been when Jesus called "Follow Me" since he was considered lowly by the world. So Matthew had a great feast in his house for Jesus (v. 29). Above all else, unlike the Pharisees, who considered themselves righteous, Matthew must have considered himself a sinner. This is because, as a tax collector who was the most despised socially, even the Pharisees treated the tax collectors as sinner. In Luke 18:13, which we have already meditated on, looking back at the tax collector's prayer when he went up to the temple to pray, he prayed like this: "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'" Unlike the Pharisees, the tax collector knew that he was a sinner. So he pleaded with God, 'God, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner.' This is how Jesus called Matthew, who knew that he was a sinner (Mt.9:9). Why? According to Luke 5:32, it was to call sinners to repentance. Why did Jesus call Matthew, a sinner, to repent? The reason is that the Lord would forgive all of Matthew's sins, justify him, and make him righteous. In a word, the Lord called Matthew to save him.

The Pharisees and the scribes considered tax collectors sitting and eating with Jesus as sinners. Therefore, they never ate with sinners, nor did they sit with them. They did this because the Pharisees and the scribes believed themselves righteous. That is why they despised tax collectors and sinners (Lk. 18:9). The reason is because the Pharisees and scribes, who believed themselves to be righteous, had no compassion. That's why Jesus said to them, "... go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice ..." (Mt. 9:13). The Pharisees and the scribes not only believed themselves righteous, but they also exalted themselves (v. 14). Those who exalt themselves in this way are arrogant and never prayed to God 'God, have mercy on me, for I am a sinner' (v. 13) nor can they do so. But Matthew, a tax collector, humbled himself (Lk. 18:14). He himself knew that he was a sinner before the Lord (v. 13). Jesus came to this earth to call the people like Matthew. And these sick people need Jesus, the true Doctor.

Who do you think are the sick people who really need a doctor? Those who are truly sick and sinners in the Lord's eyes are those who seek to justify themselves and gain salvation through their own efforts and works. But although Matthew and the tax collectors are "sick" and "sinners" in the eyes of the Pharisees and the scribes, in the eyes of the Lord they are healthy and righteous. The reason is because the Lord came to this earth for such people and shed His blood on the cross. The Lord came to this earth to heal, justify, and save people by calling a tax collector-like person (Lk. 18:13) who pleaded with God, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Therefore, the Lord grants salvation to everyone who calls on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13). I hope and pray that you may believe in the Lord Jesus Christ so that you and your family receive the great blessing of salvation.

'Your faith has healed you'

[Matthew 9:18-26]

In our Christianity, we say "faith", but what is faith? The spiritual master of evangelical theology, the Rev. James Packer, in his book "Growing in Christ," says (Internet): Christian faith is hearing the Word of God, paying attention to it, and doing it. The word "faith" implies "believe, rely on, and commit," and here we must commit to three things:

(1) We must commit ourselves to hearing the word of God.

Although we have ears, we do not hear. The reason is because we are rejecting the knowledge of God (Hos. 4:6). Now, as prophesied by the prophet Amos, there is a famine of hearing the words of the Lord (Amos 8:11). People do not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desire they gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. And they turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths (2 Tim. 4:3-4). In order for us to run the spiritual race faithfully and well to the end, we must listen to the word of God. We must be committed to hearing the voice of God.

(2) We must commit ourselves to heeding the Word of God.

Although we have eyes, we cannot see the glory of God. We do not see God working and present in our lives. The reason is because our focus is not fully on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). Now our eyes are not on the cross, but on the world. Our eyes are now on the earth rather than on the heaven. Our eyes look to the temporary things rather than the eternal things. We seem to have been blinded by the lust of the eyes. Therefore, it seems that we have entered an era in which the blind lead the blind in the church. Our eyes must be fixed on God (Ps. 141:8). We must pay attention to the Word of God.

(3) We must commit ourselves to doing the Word of God.

We must not just listen to the Word of God. We must not stop paying attention to God's Word. We must obey God's Word. We should not be deceived ourselves by hearing the word of God and not doing it (Jam. 1:22). We must build our house on the rock by hearing the words of God and putting them into practice (Mt. 7:24).

In today's text, Matthew 9:18-26, we see two men of faith. As I meditate on these two people today, I would like to receive a lesson from God for us.

The first person of faith is “a ruler.”

Look at Matthew 9:18 – “While he was saying this, a ruler came and knelt before him and said, ‘My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.’” Who is the ruler here? In the Gospel of Matthew, it just says “a ruler.” But if you look at Mark 5:22 and Luke 8:41, which contain the same story, we can see that “a ruler” is “a man named Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. A synagogue ruler is a person in charge of the synagogue, a place where the people of Judah worship and pray to God and teach and learn the Law and the Prophets. And the ruler of the synagogue was an important member of the community in which he lived, representing the people in that community (Myers). But this synagogue ruler Jairus is now coming to Jesus and falling down at his feet (Mk. 5:22; Lk. 8:41), knelt before him (Mt. 9:18) and praying earnestly to Jesus: “My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live” (v. 18). In this way, today's text says that the daughter of a man named Jairus has just died. But the Gospels of Mark and of Luke do not say that she has just died, but that she is dying (Mk. 5:23) or was dying (Lk. 8:42). Look at Mark 5:23 – “and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” Look at Luke 8:41 second half to 42 first half: “... pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.” If we put the three verses in these three Gospels together and draw a more accurate picture of the situation, a man named Jairus came to Jesus and bowed down at his feet, earnestly praying for his only 12-year-old daughter (Lk. 8:42; Mk. 5:42) was dying. So he asked Jesus to come to his house and lay his hands on her and heal her so that she could live. Hearing this plea from Jairus, Jesus got up (Mt. 9:19) and went with him to his house (Mk. 5:24). But when Jesus was going to the house of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, people came from Jairus' house and said to Jairus, “Your daughter is dead” (Mk. 5:35). Then they said to Jairus, “Why do you trouble the teacher more?” (Mk. 5:35) or “Do not trouble the teacher any more” (Lk. 8:49). Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, “Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed” (Lk.8:50). But in today's text, Matthew 9:18, Jairus came to Jesus and bowed down, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hands on her, and she will live.”

What kind of faith do you think this synagogue ruler Jairus had? I think Jairus' faith was his belief that Jesus could raise his daughter from the dead. In other words, the faith of Jairus was that Jesus could raise the dead. When I think of Jairus' faith, I think of Abraham, the father of faith. When he was tested by God, by faith he offered

his only son, Isaac, to God. How could Abraham do that? Look at Hebrews 11:19 – “Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.” Also, when I think of the faith of Jairus, the ruler of this synagogue, I think of Martha, the sister of Lazarus, who died in John 11. It is because Martha said to Jesus, “‘Lord,’ ... ‘if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask’” (Jn. 11:21-22). Then Jesus said to Martha, “Your brother will rise again” (v. 23). Martha heard this and said to Jesus, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (v. 24). What did Jesus say to Martha then? “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (vv. 25-26) Hearing these words of Jesus, Martha confessed her faith to Jesus: “Yes, Lord, ... I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world” (v. 27). Do we really have this kind of faith? Do we really believe that Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, is the Lord and the Christ, the Son of God who is coming into the world? Do we really believe that whoever lives and believes in Jesus will never die? After Jesus told Jairus, who had such faith, “Do not be afraid, just believe, and his daughter will be saved” (Lk. 8:50), then he went to Jairus’s house. And when Jesus entered the house of Jairus, he saw the flute players and the noisy crowd (Mt. 9:23), that is, people were wailing and mourning for the Jairus’ daughter (Mk. 5:38; Lk. 8:52). Seeing this, Jesus said to them, “Stop wailing” (Lk. 8:52), “The girl is not dead but asleep” (Mt. 9:24). The people gathered at that time laughed at Jesus (v. 24). Why did they laugh at Jesus? It was because they knew that Jairus’ daughter was dead (Lk. 8:53). At that time, after sending the crowd out (Mt. 9:25), Jesus took the child’s parents and the disciples Peter, John, and James, who were with him, and went in where the child was (Mk. 5:40; Lk. 8: 51). After that, Jesus took Jairus’s daughter by the hand and said, “Talitha koun!” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!” (Mk. 5:41) Then the girl’s spirit returned and the child immediately stood up (Lk. 8:55) and walked (Mk. 5:42). Eventually, Jesus said to Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid, just believe, and your daughter will be saved” (Lk. 8:50). When they saw the 12-year-old girl who had been resurrected, not only her parents were astonished (Lk. 8:56), but also the people were astonished and amazed (Mk. 5:42). After ordering all the people not to tell anyone what had happened (Lk. 8:56), Jesus told them to give the girl something to eat (Mk. 5:43). The news that Jesus raised the only daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue from the dead, spread through all that region (Mt. 9:26).

I hope and pray that you and I will have the same faith as Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. I pray that we have faith that believes Jesus can raise the dead. Today, Jesus is asking us “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (Jn. 11:25-26) I bless you in the name of Jesus that we live forever by believing in Jesus who is the resurrection and the life.

Finally, the second person of faith is “a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years.”

Look at Matthew 9:20 – “Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak.” When Jesus heard the plea of a man named Jairus and went with him to save his 12-year-old daughter, his disciples (Mt. 9:19) and a large crowd followed him and pressed around him (Mk. 5:24). As for how much they pressed around him, Luke 8:42 says that the crowds almost crushed Jesus almost to the point of suffocation (Vine). To understand this situation a little more, we have to look at Luke 12:1a – “Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another” Meanwhile, a woman in the crowd, who had been suffering from bleeding for 12 years, came behind Jesus and touched the edge of Jesus' cloak (Mt. 9:20). Why did she do that? This is because she thought in her heart that if she touched Jesus' cloak, she would be healed (v. 21; Mk. 5:28). In order to understand more about this woman's feelings, we have to look at the Gospels of Mark and of Luke, where we can see how much this woman was suffering from a disease. To sum up the words of the two Gospels, this woman suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors for 12 years. And she spent all she had by giving out her materials to many doctors (Mk. 5:26).

However, even though she tried so hard to cure her disease of hemorrhage, instead of getting better she grew worse (Mk. 5:26) and no one could heal her (Lk. 8:43). In addition to the more specific explanations of these two Gospels, we should also consider the disease the woman was suffering from bleeding, a hemorrhage. The modern encyclopedic meaning is that hemorrhage is a compound word of the Greek words haima and leo, meaning the outflow of blood. Usually, women only bleed during menstruation, but this disease causes irregular bleeding regardless of menstruation. This disease is said to include functional uterine bleeding and organic uterine bleeding (diseases caused by inflammation, sepsis, tumors, leukemia, etc.). Among organic uterine bleeding, malignancy is cancer, and prolonged bleeding is said to be proliferative endometritis (Internet). However, this woman's illness was physically hopeless for her. But I think it must have been hopeless mentally as well. The reason is because people suffering from bleeding disorders were considered unclean and despised. To some extent, the place where the hemorrhagic patient lay or sat was considered unclean, and the bed, clothes, and seat she used were all unclean (Lev.15:19-20). Earthenware that the leaky patient touched had to be broken, and wooden utensils had to be washed. If you come into contact with this patient, you will wash your clothes, and even if you wash your body with water, you will remain unclean until evening. Therefore, if a virgin became ill with this disease, she could not marry. And if she was married, her husband usually divorced her. This woman was forbidden from entering the temple, from worshiping God and from having fellowship with other people. Because of this, this woman was a pitiful woman who had no choice but to be rejected from her family and society. Had she been a married woman, she would have been abandoned by her husband too. In this way, this woman was abandoned by her family, society, and even religion (Internet). After 12 years of despair, physically, mentally and in every way, she heard the news of Jesus. And when Jesus went to the house of a man named Jairus, the synagogue leader, she joined the crowd and came behind Jesus and touched his cloak (Mk. 5:27). The reason she did this was because she thought that if she touched Jesus' cloak, she would be healed (v. 28). At that time, Jesus healed many people, so people who were ill came to touch him (Mk. 3:10). Look at Mark 6:56 – “And wherever he went--into villages, towns or countryside--they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who

touched him were healed.” What does it mean? The reason the sick begged Jesus to let them touch even the edge of Jesus’ cloak was because all those who touched were healed. So this woman, who had been suffering from bleeding for 12 years, also came behind Jesus and touched the edges of his cloak. What was the result? Look at Mark 5:29 – “Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.” That is, the moment she touched the edge of Jesus’ cloak, the blood stopped immediately and she felt that she was healed. She could feel her own body enjoying her freedom from her disease, which was her bleeding. At that time, Jesus knew that his power had gone out of him, and he turned from the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” (v. 30). To say that Jesus himself knew that his power had gone out of him means that he knew that someone had touched him (Lk. 8:46). But at that time, the crowd all denied it (v. 45). At that time, Jesus’ disciple Peter said to Jesus, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you” (v. 45). This is what Mark 5:31 says: “You see the people crowding against you, his disciples answered, and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus already knew exactly who touched the edge of his cloak. How do we know that? Look at Mark 5:32 – “But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it.” At that time, the woman who had been healed of bleeding for 12 years came to Jesus, trembling with fear, knowing that she could not go unnoticed (Lk.8:47), fell on her face and told him the whole truth (Mark 5:33). In other words, she told everyone why she touched the edge of Jesus’ cloak and that she was healed (Lk. 8:47). Hearing this, Jesus said to her, “Take heart, daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace (and be freed from your suffering)” (Mt. 9:22; Lk. 8:48; Mk.5:34). In Korean Bible, it says ‘Take heart, daughter, your faith has saved you.’ Why did Jesus say, ‘your faith has saved you’? Jesus could have just said, ‘Your faith has healed you’. Not only that, but the woman who was suffering from hemorrhage also tells Jesus that she thought she would be saved (in Korean Bible) in her heart if she touched Jesus’ cloak (v. 21). Why does the Korean Bible use the word “saved” in this way? The reason is because the woman’s disease, bleeding, is related to her sin. Remember what Jesus said to the paralytic, whom we had already meditated on in Matthew 9, before he commanded, “Get up, take your mat and go home” (v. 6), “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven” (v. 2) In the end, before Jesus healed the paralytic, he first forgave his spiritual illness, sin. Then Jesus healed him. As such, it seems that the woman suffering from bleeding in Matthew 9 in today’s text was also suffering from a disease due to the problem of sin. Therefore, after saying, ‘Take heart, daughter, ... your faith has saved you. God in peace’ (Mt. 9:22; Lk. 8:48, Korean Bible), and then said “be freed from your suffering” (Mk. 5:34). As a result, the woman was immediately saved (Mt. 9:22, Korean Bible). “And the woman was healed from that moment” (v. 22). That is, she immediately stopped her bleeding (Lk. 8:44). That is, she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering (Mk. 5:29).

What kind of faith do you think this woman, who has suffered from bleeding for 12 years, believes? This woman’s faith was faith that believes in the healing power of Jesus. Look at Matthew 9:21 – “She said to herself, ‘If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.’” Here in verse 21, the woman who had been suffering from this bleeding for 12 years thought that she would be healed just by touching Jesus’ cloak. In verse 22, the next verse, Jesus said to the woman, “your faith has healed you.” That is, the woman believed in Jesus. She believed that her sickness could be healed by the power of Jesus with the touch of a finger on the edge of Jesus’ cloak. This faith is what made her heal. The Bible James 5:16 says, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may

be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” We must pray for each other so that we may be healed of our sickness according to this word. He said, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (v. 16). Let's pray earnestly in faith. Faith here should not be the belief that we can be healed by praying, but rather the belief in the Lord who has the power to heal us. And that faith must be a faith that humbly acknowledges and accepts the sovereignty of God. In other words, when we believe in the Lord's healing power, acknowledge God's sovereignty, and pray, even though our will is to be healed, if the Lord's will is to heal us, He will heal us. But if His will is not to heal us but He has another will, we must believe that His will is good and should be able to pray to God, ‘May Your will be done.’ This is to pray for healing through faith in the power of the Lord.

Now there are people whom I am praying for God's healing. One of them is a sister in Christ who is in her late 30s. I have shared many times during the early Morning Prayer meeting about her. She is the one who continues to suffer after getting burns about 10 years ago. She already had three major surgeries. She made a prayer request through Kakao Talk two weeks ago. She told me that her mother, who is a Buddhist, decided to attend the first service on a Sunday at her church and asked me to pray. At that time, I thanked her for sharing the good news and answered, ‘God, who knows your earnestly prayer, will hear and answer your prayer, and will accomplish his perfect will. Then I said to the sister: ‘If only your mother could be saved and receive eternal life even through your great suffering’ But last week, her mother came to church and worshiped with her best friend. And after having worshiped, they had meal together. Her best friend e-mailed me and I learned something I didn't know. The fact is that the mother said that she did not go to church just because her daughter wanted her. And as a devout Buddhist, it was a great pain for her to give up that faith for 10 years. Then, she happened to watch Christian TV and the sermons were good. And even though she had determined to go to church a week ago, she hesitated because she could not speak to her daughter prematurely. After hesitating, the pastor in charge of the department to which her daughter belongs came and told her to make a decision. So, she decided to go to church and worship.

Do we really think that suffering is precious and worthwhile suffering if our family members who do not believe in Jesus can receive Jesus as their savior and receive salvation even through the great suffering caused by a disease? Are we earnestly praying for forgiveness of unrepentant sins rather than asking God to heal our diseases? I hope and pray that you and I will be praying to the Lord like Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, who believes in the Lord's power to forgive sins and heal diseases through faith, and like the woman who suffered from bleeding for 12 years.

Conclusion

We who follow Jesus are poor in spirit, mourners, meek, hunger and thirsty for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Also, we who follow Jesus are those who have been called by the Lord. The Lord has also promised us, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." We who listen to the voice of the Lord and obey the Lord's call and follow the Lord must not only open our mouths to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, but also live a life worthy of the gospel. We who follow Jesus are the light and salt of this world. We must not become disciples of Jesus who have lost their taste. Rather, we must shine the light of Jesus into this dark world. We must live our lives reflecting good deeds. We must give up our hypocrisy and live a life of harmony in words and deeds. Also, we should not judge others, but rather live a life of love where we treat them and show mercy to them. Also, as we are wary of false prophets, we should not lay up treasures on this earth. And we should enter the small gate that the Lord walked through and walk the narrow path. And we must walk with the faith that Jesus also marvels. We must also serve the eternal God for eternal things with eternal values. We should never serve God and money at the same time. As followers of Jesus, who died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, we must live a holy life separate from the world. And we must live a fruitful life for the Lord. We are to be wise men and women who build the Lord's church and our homes on the rock of Jesus Christ. To do this, we must pray to our Heavenly Father. We must pray in faith the prayer that the Lord taught us. And we should go ahead and pray to Heavenly Father without worrying about tomorrow. Therefore, I hope and pray that we will enjoy the grace of salvation more and more fully by receiving prayers answered by Heavenly Father.