

120521 "**Prepare the Way for the Lord**" Luke 3:1-6

One of the beautiful hymns by Charles Wesley helps us celebrate the anticipation and arrival of Jesus Christ into the world and into our lives. "**Come, thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free, From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.**"

We've been through COVID-19 for the past two years, haven't our hearts been really busy and hard to find rest? As we enter the second week of Advent, we expect and wait for Jesus' coming, and I hope that we will reaffirm that our true rest is in the Lord.

1. In Luke chapter 3 verses 1 and 2, there are the names of the emperor, governor, three tetrarch kings, two high priests and John the Baptist. But what is interesting here is that the word of God did not come to five authorities in the palaces, or even to the two high priests in the temple, but to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. The wilderness is full of loneliness, questioning, and despair. We often feel knocked down and terribly alone. Whenever that happens, we use the expression that I feel like I am in the wilderness. On the other hand, palaces and the temple look very secure, right?

Ironically, however, as we reflect on when we are most attentive to God's word, it is often when we are in the wilderness, in empty fields, of life. Of course, our daily life is physically far from the wilderness, but our hearts should become empty fields at times, or wilderness where we can receive God's word so that our hearts are not too busy with the news and the things of the world. Only then can we receive the word of God as our own. We're living in a time of the wilderness in a sense, but I hope that the Word of God will come to you more clearly in times like these.

2. Regarding John the Baptist, in Luke 1:14-15a, it was written: "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord." This verse is the angel talking to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. All parents want their children to succeed. But the manifestation of that success may differ. Parents want children to own more than others, to go higher than others, to win in competitions, and be a "big person" in the world. Parents want it for their children, and for themselves. But God tells us that there is one thing we really need to value and pray for: being a "big person" in the eyes of God. The linguistic origins of "big" (mega in a Greek word) and "grace" (charis in a Greek word) are the same. In other words, the great people in the Bible refer to those who experience God's grace or people who are still experiencing God's grace.

There are many "big" people in the world who are extremely small in front of God. Jesus says of John the Baptist: "I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist." (Matthew 11:11) John, in Hebrew, means to be blessed, or to be loved by Jehovah or Yawah. We hope that our children's lives will also become greater before God rather than becoming greater in the world, and let's not stop praying for our children! And I bless you to become a great person who always experiences God's grace.

3. John the Baptist fulfilled his mission as "one who prepares the way for the Lord." Verse 4 says, "As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: A voice of one calling in the desert, **Prepare** the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him." Here "prepare" [kataskeuazo] in a Greek word is a compound word of two. [kata] means through, or exactly according to. [skeuazo] means vessels or tools. When we look at the works of God in the Bible, we see that Almighty God does not work alone, but God calls people imperfect and weak and God works through the vessels.

Like the word "prepare", through the vessels, God worked in the past, God is working now, and God will continue to do so in the future. It is written in Jeremiah chapter 18 verse 6, "...Just like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel." Do you believe that you are a vessel in the hands of God? The reason God molds you with God's hands is because God loves you.

4.If you look at the pictures of me when I was a baby, I always have very short hair. Once I asked my mother why, she said that when I was a baby, I had a lot of fever followed by a rash, and she always shaved my head like that. Then, she told me that, once, to bring down my fever, my mother did everything on the planet, but my fever did not go down. Fever is the most dangerous thing for babies! Until I was young, there were many poor neighborhoods in South Korea. It was difficult to get help from medical staff in such an environment. My mother didn't really know what to do at the time.

I have a sister who is 3 years older and a younger brother who is 1 year younger than me. Before my mother became pregnant with my sister, she had miscarried 7 times before. Actually, the doctors told my mother to give up having children. Surprisingly, however, God gave my parents three children. Since they were hard-earned children, how much more did my mother value us? Then, in that town, there was a class meeting (where several families gather in a house to worship together), and a pastor invited us to join. My mother, who had no other way, carried me into the room. While singing hymns together, she said that, miraculously, my fever, which had not come down, had gone. In the midst of praising, God showed grace to me and my mother. The praise that was sung at that time was "I know not why God's wondrous grace". #714 UMH

1 I know not why God's wondrous grace to me is daily shown,
nor why, with mercy, Christ in love redeemed me for his own.

But "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day."

It's not because I'm special, but it was a grace and a miracle that was given to me so that I could experience God working in the midst of praise, not to lose the life of praising even if there were hardships in my life. So this hymn has been the most special hymn and a confession of faith for me. I pray that while you also praise God, your problems will be resolved and, above all, you will experience true rest in the Lord.

1 John chapter 4 verses 10 through 12 says, "This is what real love is: It is not our love for God; it is God's love for us in sending his Son to be the way to take away our sins. Dear friends, if God loved us that much we also should love each other. No one has ever seen God, but if we love each other, God loves in us, and God's love is made perfect in us."

Dear beloved, we know that Christ saved us from death and gave us the gift of salvation. I pray that we will all be a "big" person in front of God, as John the Baptist was. I pray that we will not be big in worldly terms, ruling over others, but that we will obey the word of God, live in God's presence, and walk with our Lord Jesus Christ throughout our lives. we prepare for Advent in a spirit of hope and love during this unprecedented year of uncertainty and anxiety. As we continue to wear masks and wait for things to get better, we look for hope and love in the promise of Jesus' coming. Because of this love, let us find our rest in Christ our Lord! Amen.