

082023 Sermon "Joy in Coming Together for Worship." Psalm 133:1-3

Today's Psalm 133 has the title, "The Song of Ascents." Also, among the 15 psalms called 'The Pilgrimage to the Temple', there are four David's psalms, and among them, it is the last 4th. As a historical background, many biblical scholars view it as singing with joy that the unity of God's people, which had been broken, was restored when the Ark of the Covenant was taken away by the Philistines and placed back in Jerusalem.

In today's Psalm 133, the words 'Zion' and 'blessing' appear, and it tells us how blessed it is to worship God in unity. Verse 1 begins like this, "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!" In today's psalm, kindred refer primarily to the people of the same family and tribe, and secondarily to a community of faith that believes in and worships God, even if they are not blood-divided people. So, in the church today, we often use the expression that we are brothers and sisters in God, regardless of race, skin color, country, age, disability, and social background.

The church is called [ekklesia] in Greek, but the original meaning of this word refers to those who have been called or gathering of those called. What motivated you to come to church? There may be various reasons. However, no matter how it started, we all live hoping for a deeper relationship with God. In the worship of God and through continuous study of the Scriptures. And the life of loving God is a life of loving one's neighbors, both communally and individually. For example, this VBS was also conducted in the same context. Why would you spend your time, energy, and money on an event like this? It is to convey God's love to those who belong to our community, especially this event for children.

You may think that you come to church because you wanted to come to church, but what the Bible reminds us of is that God called us first, that is, because we have been called by God, so we came to church and became members of the church, the body of the Lord.

And that call has a purpose. These words are recorded in Ephesians 4:1 and below. "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love, diligently to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Verse 1 again, "Behold how good and pleasant it is for kindred to dwell together in unity!" Your education, job, wealth, and origin are all different, but how can we unite, or live together in faith? It is difficult even for brothers and sisters who share blood to live in unity.

Being one in the Bible does not mean that we think and we feel the same. I'm not talking about being blind like communism or heresy. Instead, there is a saying that the place of Christian unity is in the heart or soul. Although the environment in which each of us has lived is different, as each of you thinks of God's Word as a standard and prays to discern its meaning, the Holy Spirit enlightens us. Since the early church, believers have discerned God's will through the Word of God and through prayer.

Think about it! There were fishermen like Peter around Jesus, and there were even tax collectors and prostitutes. But there was also a Roman centurion and a Sanhedrin congressman like Nicodemus. There was also Joseph of Arimathea, who was a very rich man. How did these people become one?

Because Jesus, who was not only born as the Son of Man in a lowly manger, but also was the Son of the Most High God, can sympathize and help both the low and the high. That's the reason why we can fit together in Jesus Christ: the low and the high, the poor and the rich, the talented and the meek, all of whom are brothers and sisters in Christ.

In our church, the 10 o'clock congregation (mostly Americans) and the 1 o'clock congregation (mostly Korean Americans) are learning harmony and unity in God. We are learning to be united in God as we worship together, organize events together, and fellowship together. We discern the purpose for which God has called us through prayer and the Word of God.

Peace is 'Shalom' in Hebrew and 'Eirene' in Greek, which means to unite. Thin branches become strong when joined together. So, in Ecclesiastes 4, it says, 'A threefold cord is not easily broken'. If you see that many branches are tied into a bundle, they are made up of branches of different lengths and different thicknesses. However, the bundle is very strong. In the same way, the Bible reminds us that when people are united as one in the Holy Spirit and discerned by the word of God, they become stronger than anything else.

As for how precious unity in God is, today's psalm says that it is like oil on the head and like dew falling on Hermon. Hermon is a very high mountain that forms the source of Jordan. This place was famous for a lot of dew, so when you say Hermon's dew, it means a lot of dew. It was said that the oil on the head also dripped down to the collar. What does that mean? This speaks of the abundant blessings from God! To whom? To those who live worthy of God's calling, to the people of God who tolerate each other in the Word of God and who live loving each other.

Ezekiel 11:19-20 says, "I will give them a heart of one accord, and I will put new shoes within them, and I will remove the heart of stone from them and give them a heart of flesh, so that they will walk in my statutes and keep my statutes and walk them; and they will be my people, and I will be their God."

A church member once said this to me. Every time he comes to church on a Sunday, he comes in anticipation of what God will say to him that day. May God bless him for his expectancy and eagerness. There is a big difference between attending church without expectations and becoming a worshiper with expectations!

Hunger Makes for a Good Meal

The French have a proverb, which states, "A good meal ought to begin with hunger." It is hard to enjoy a meal when you are not yet hungry. But, when you are hungry, anything tastes good.

If we approach the Word with a hunger to be satisfied, we will be satisfied every time. Effective worship begins with a hunger for God.

Dear beloved, come to church with expectations. Jesus says I will build my church. He doesn't just say a little bit of my church except in big cities I will build my church so invest in the church. Invest your time, invest your talents, invest your materials, invest yours but invest your life! God promises joy in coming together for worship and abundant blessings. I don't know about you but I really believe that! Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, with your family, with your business, with your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.