

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: The Becoming of Christians

Lesson: Ephesians 5:15-20 NRSV

(Slide 1) The weather is so nice these days. I really like the weather these past few days. By the way I had mostly spent time at home until I got my Covid-19 test results because I felt a sore throat and difficulty of breathing on Monday. From Tuesday, my condition was fine, but I was tested just in case, and I received the result on Thursday morning. Fortunately, the result was negative. After receiving the result, my family and I went to the Clear Lake Park. Sitting on a camp chair under the shade of trees and enjoying the cool breeze and a forest bath and the beautiful lake is a great joy for my family.

The season is changing from summer to autumn. The weather these days reminds us of last year when we had just moved to Clear Lake. At that time, Evan couldn't walk, crawled, and was just starting to roll over, but now he walks very well and climbs on the sofa and the dining chairs by himself, I can feel that he has grown a lot. And, I feel that time goes by so quickly. Come to think of it, we have almost four months before the end of this year. Many people make a lot of plans at the end of the year or at the beginning of the year like drink less coffee, lose ten pounds, etc.

(Slide 2) At the beginning of each year, people make many plans, buy books for self-development such as "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" and try to develop themselves. They try to change their personality, they try to change their mindset, they try to change their life. Regardless of their religions or beliefs, we can see that many people seek change in their lives. However, most of them fail to change their lives. According to the humor book I have, people can be divided into three groups: Those who make things happen, those who watch things

happen, and those who wonder what happened. What is the difference between those who change and those who fail to change?

(Slide 3) In today's scripture lesson, Paul strongly recommended the members of the Ephesians to change their lives saying, "live wisely, take advantage of every opportunity, understand the Lord's will, don't get drunk, sing and praise God." Encouragements like these are very familiar to us today, but they must have been very uncomfortable for the members of Ephesians. Encouragement is a request to change the behavior of the listeners. At the time, in Ephesians, there were Gentile Christians who were converted to Christianity. They believed and accepted Jesus as the Christ, but over time they were losing their initial determination. That is why Paul wrote them a letter of encouragement.

Paul's exhortation was the attitude toward life that those who believed in Jesus as their Savior should adopt. However, when we read today's scripture lesson, we can know that the Ephesians church members confessed and believed in Jesus as Christ, but they acted like ignorant people, wasted their time, did not understand the Lord's will, and became drunk and did not feel grateful for life. To them, Paul told that if you truly believe that Jesus is the Lord of your life, then your life must be reborn.

(Slide 4) What he constantly repeats is to learn the wisdom of God and not to live according to the secular ways and wisdom, and standards, but to live according to God's wisdom. For the past two weeks, we have learned and agreed that Jesus is the Bread of life through the Gospel of John, and have believed and confessed that He is the Bread of life for our lives. During the two weeks, I said that what we eat is important because the food makes us. In this way, people are greatly affected by what they eat. Therefore, Christians who eat and drink Jesus's flesh and blood should be changed into the people of God. John 6:56-57 NRSV

tells that “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me.”

(Slide 5) The Apostle Paul tells us to change our habits of life as we are truly wise Christians. He tells us to change to live according to God’s will. I will read today’s scripture reading: Ephesians 5:15-21, ERV again: “So be very careful how you live. Live wisely, not like fools. I mean that you should use every opportunity you have for doing good, because these are evil times. So don’t be foolish with your lives, but learn what the Lord wants you to do. Don’t be drunk with wine, which will ruin your life, but be filled with the Spirit. Encourage each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord. Always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

To make this in one sentence, it is a strong call for Christians to change their lives according to the will of the Lord. It is calling us to experience the presence of God through a godly life.

According to Paul, the wise people save their time and use their lives as an opportunity to do good, do no harm, and stay in love with God. Christians do not rely on drunkenness, but seek to gain the energy of the Holy Spirit and that holy spirituality. The spiritual community comforts and encourages one another through heartfelt praise. Also, Christians are always grateful people. Even at the last moment they don’t let go of thanks to God.

Beloved, we must focus our lives on loving God and following His will. We must live by the Word. We must build our healthy spiritual life. Our greatest privilege as the children of God is to share the presence of Christ—God is with us with our neighbors. The main message of the bestselling books about self-development is “Everything depends on

your mind, optimism, dream comes true.” Many people read the books but failed to follow it. This is because this is easier said than done. However, the Bible tells us not to just think or speak, but to truly change your life.

(Slide 6) Today’s scripture emphasizes the work of praise saying: “As you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts.” (19) A week ago, Tokyo Olympics ended. In 2012, there was the London Olympics, and at the opening ceremony, a female singer sang the hymn: “Abide with me.” Her song touched the hearts of many. I believe that the song is needed not only in the Olympics, but in everything we do like when we exercise, study, sleep because there is not one place in our lives where God’s presence does not reach.

People who want the Lord to abide with them love the song. God’s presence provides wisdom, peace, comfort, and strength wherever we are and whatever we do. It is the promise of the Lord. Therefore, we should not only respond to God’s grace and love with prayers, and spiritual songs, but also sing and praise to the Lord with our hearts.

Paul’s exhortation to change our lives is not easy to hear and sometimes we fail to follow God’s will, but as the children of God, and those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior and the Bread of Life, go beyond just confessing Jesus Christ in words, and into life. It is necessary to confess in action.

May our Willow River Parish sing and praise to the Lord wholeheartedly. May we live according to our hymns and prayers of life and the will of the Lord. May we be changed into His likeness little by little every day. Amen.