

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

Title: Expensive Grace and Cheap Grace

Lesson: 2 Samuel 11:1-15 & Ephesians 3:14-21 NRSV

(Slide1) Today's scripture reading in Ephesians 3 is about Paul's prayer. He prayed that "you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ." (18) He wanted all church members to realize the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ. God's love for us is boundless and infinite, so we cannot measure His love. What Paul wanted us to realize was that God has given us infinite love and He sacrificed his only Son, Jesus Christ, for our sins. He sent his son to us, not because he was unworthy, but because he loved us, though he was so precious. We have received precious and expensive grace from God for free. It may not be appropriate to compare God's grace to a vaccine for COVID-19, but the US government has developed the vaccine at great expense.

(Slide2) The high cost of medical care in the United States is world famous. On average, healthcare costs in the US are 10 times more expensive than in Korea. So, some people recommend that "if you have a decayed tooth or need an appendectomy, buy a flight ticket to Korea." This is because the cost of medical care in Korea is still cheaper even including the airfare.

About a month ago, my right knee started giving me trouble when I go up and down the stairs, or bend my knee. I assumed it was maybe from walking too long while holding Evan. There was no injury or accident, so it seemed that there would be no problem with the bones, but the doctor recommended that I get x-rays taken. Thankfully, the x-rays showed that there were no problems with the bones. He also recommended that I have an MRI for an accurate diagnosis. The MRI estimate was \$2,583. I'm still contemplating whether to take a picture of it. But looking at the cost in Korea, I noticed it costs about \$300-\$500 without insurance. My story turned out to be too long!

What I wanted to say is that while health care in the US is known to be expensive, the government has provided that precious vaccine for free to all its residents and citizens. If we had to buy the vaccine, it would have been expensive, but they gave us them for free, not because the vaccine was

unworthy, but because they wanted all people in the US to take it without hesitation because of money.

(Slide3) Like this, God's grace is unconditional and expensive even though He gave us it for free. The opposite of expensive grace is cheap grace. The term cheap grace was often used by German Lutheran church pastor Bonhoeffer (1906-1945). He told that God's grace is given to everyone, but those who realized that they received it, must take responsibility for that grace in their lives. Similarly, theologian Dallas Willard (1935-2013) often emphasized the importance of discipleship. One of his famous lines is that "Discipleship is the process of becoming who Jesus would be if he were you." In other words, everyone who goes to church or participates in worship can be a Christian, but without discipleship or the process of becoming, nobody can be a disciple. Likewise, Christian faith and grace entail practice and action.

(Slide4) One of my hobbies is watching movies. I like Korean movies and American movies. About 10 years ago, I watched a Korean movie titled Secret Sunshine. I think the movie explained well about what I have said, so I want to introduce it briefly.

There was a woman who moved to a rural city from Seoul with her little boy after the loss of her husband. She wanted to get out of the grief of losing her husband and start anew in the new place. After settling there, she lived there and taught piano. Her son went to elementary school during the day and Taekwondo studio in the evening. The Taekwondo instructor who ran the studio had a warm smile and seemed to have a good personality. By the time the woman and her son had almost settled in their new place, her son had gone missing. After she called the police, the son was found dead. And the suspect was caught, and he was the Taekwondo instructor.

She felt frustrated because she already lost her husband, but also lost her only son. She lost the meaning of her life. Nothing made her happy. Over time, her condition did not improve. She had never been to church at the time, but her neighbors encouraged her to go to church with them. During the Sunday worship, she burst into tears and her crying sounded almost like screaming. Her crying helped her open her heart to the church and she started to attend

the church actively and shared the gospel with people around her. With many prayers, her life was being changed. As time passed, her heart and mind seemed to have healed a lot. So she gathered up the courage to visit the prison where the suspect was being held and forgave him because she didn't want him to live with guilty feelings.

By the way, contrary to her expectations, the suspect's expression seemed very gentle and calm. Before she could even say she would forgive him, she was told that he met God in prison and that God had already forgiven him. The moment she heard his words, she felt deeply betrayed by God. Before she forgives him first, who can forgive him?

Beloved, if the murderer was a real disciple of Christ, what should he have done first? If he really believed that Jesus Christ is his savior in his life, what would he have done first? He should have asked her for forgiveness first.

Faith without practice and sinning without guilt and asking God for forgiveness, and repeating the same sin over and over again are called as cheap grace Bonhoeffer said. Our confession of faith begins with realizing that we are sinners and repenting with the help of the Holy Spirit. Faith without practice can be a Christian but cannot be a true disciple.

God's grace is given to everyone. It is free and unconditional. We don't have to do anything to earn it. But the lives of those who realize that they have received grace from God are accompanied by discipleship. This means that we must bear the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

(Slide5) Today's scripture in 2 Samuel describes David's transgression. As you know, King Saul was rejected by God, but David was chosen by Him. He chose him from a young age when he didn't receive any attention, and made him king of Israel when he was 30 years old. David had an upright personality and always walked with God. So whenever he was in the war, he was protected by God and always won. Saul didn't achieve dynasty, but David did. David was always close to God and followed God's word, but he was also a human vulnerable to sin.

Verse 2 NRSV tells that "It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he

saw a beautiful woman bathing and fell in love.” David sent someone to inquire about the woman and got to know that she is Bathsheba. Even though he knew she is married, he made her come to him and he lay with her. (4) A few weeks or months later, she conceived, and informed him of her pregnancy. At the time, Israel was at war with other nations, and Bathsheba’s husband Uriah was also at war. David summoned Uriah, treated him well, but plotted to kill him in the hardest fighting. In the end, Uriah was dead in the battle.

After Uriah’s death and the lamentation was over, David brought Bathsheba to his house and married her, and she bore him a son. He followed God almost all his life, but it was very wicked in God’s sight for him to kill Uriah and take Bathsheba as his wife. So, God sent Prophet Nathan and said: “You have killed Uriah with the sword of the Ammonites, and have taken his wife to be your wife ...the child that is born to you shall die.” (12:9, 14)

(Slide6) David prayed earnestly to God for the son, fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. (12:16) Psalm 51 is his prayer when David repented his sin: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin...” (1-2)

Righteous God eventually took the son of Bathsheba and David because God loves sinners but hates sins. When God saw David repenting with all his heart, He forgave him and gave them a new son, who is named Solomon. Saul was rejected by God and his dynasty wasn’t achieved but David’s dynasty started through Solomon.

(Slide7) Beloved, God has loved us and gave us his grace. Anyone can become a Christian, but cannot become a disciple without discipleship, practice of love in their lives because faith accompanies practice, and faith accompanies repentance.

I want us to take this week to check our spiritual lives and faith. And I’ll see you again at church next Sunday. Amen.