

Sunday Sermon 081323 Isaiah 53:4-8, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

"The Cross: The Power and The Wisdom of God"

In the words spoken by Jesus, there are not one or two, but several things that cannot be understood simply by human thoughts. Among those, one of the most difficult concepts to understand is the way of the cross.

Many people tend to think of the cross as a guardian angel. They hang it on their necks, tattoo it on their skin, draw it on their possessions, and carve it as a statue. While doing so, they come to feel familiar with and comforted by the cross. I must admit, I also have several crosses hanging in my home, which I often look to for assurance.

However, these people may be confused about, or not even consider, the *meaning* of the cross in Christianity. "The way of the cross" means, in other words, "the love of the cross." It is the love of God that is deeply engraved into the cross, rather than human love. Therefore, it becomes easier to understand the meaning of "the way of the cross" when people give up their human methods and stubbornness.

Sometimes, people experience the love of the cross when they are confronted with an inevitable dead end. The cross allows us to have God's everlasting power and wisdom, which only God can give.

Today, I want to share with you two points about the cross.

First, the way of the cross is a paradoxical truth.

The world cannot accept this paradoxical truth. And Satan is the same way. Why? Because living by such contradictory truths seems foolish by worldly standards. However, God provides wisdom to those who accept this foolish way.

Although following the way of the cross may seem foolish, these followers accept the foolish way because it is the word of God. Consequently, accepting the word of God becomes accepting God himself. At such a moment, those faithful people are given the great joy of knowing the truth.

Well, I offer you some wonderful news related to the cross: our God is the almighty God! Only God can create victory with a loss! Only God can make a fool wise! And only He can reverse death with everlasting life! Why do Christian churches erect crosses on their buildings? It is the universal symbol that triggers people to remember God's life and His works.

Let's listen to the paradoxical and contradictory truth of the cross. Because of Jesus, Christian believers win even when they lose, are wise even in their foolishness, and are alive even when they die. When Jesus was crucified on the cross, Satan looked to human sin to overcome him, but Jesus defeated the power of sin, and He proclaimed that He had fully finished His mission on earth.

As Christians, we throw out our own human wisdom in order to attain God's wisdom. By worldly standards, throwing out one's wisdom is seemingly foolish. And that is why we become fools. However, God's wisdom is hidden in the foolishness of humans.

Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins. However, the Father God repaid Jesus' sacrifice with the glory of the resurrection. This was the paradoxical secret of the cross. Following and believing in Jesus is never easy; It sometimes requires pain like death. Those who believe in the cross live their lives for others, like Jesus lived for others. Accordingly, Jesus will take responsibility for the lives of those believers.

We cannot separate the cross from the glory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, the cross and the resurrection of Christ are treated as one. Jesus on the cross foresaw the glory of His resurrection (Heb. 12:1), and the victory of resurrection set Him free from the power of death (Acts 2:24). Thus, God gave us new life, and this fills us with living hope (1 Pet. 1:3).

The second point I wanted to share is that the way of the cross is the truth of atonement (Is 53:4–8). God's grace is working for us in advance of our salvation, which leads and guides us into redemption. In biblical terms, this grace was given to us "while we were still sinners" through Christ's death for us (Ro 5:8). The love of

the cross was wholly given to human beings, even when we did not know how to repent of our sins.

There is a very influential professor in Korea by the name of Tae Young Yoo. Let's hear his confession of faith. Dr. Yoo said, "In the 1940s, God gave me a great and secret present when I was a 5th grader. A small church was built in my poor mountain village. The church rented a thatch-roofed house, and it became the only joyful place for me when I was worn out by all the poverty surrounding me." The young, licensed preacher told the boy, Tae Young, "God is not far away from you. He listens to your every prayer. The reason Jesus was crucified on the cross was to redeem you."

Dr. Yoo always treasured and held dear these words from the preacher throughout his whole life. Working as a countryside farmer after graduating from elementary school, Dr. Yoo was able to enroll in middle school for the first time at the age of 18. Every day, early in the morning, before the sun came up and it was still dark, he went to church to pray.

As a young boy, he was scared because sometimes a local wild tiger snatched domestic animals. He would shout, with strong conviction, "God sent Jesus Christ and crucified him on the cross for me! I am so precious that God will protect me! So, the tiger cannot harm me!"

Later in the future, he studied in Denmark and Israel. He earned a doctorate degree at a Hebrew university in Israel and later became a professor at that same school. Afterwards, Dr. Yoo came back to Korea and greatly contributed to the development and economic revival of the Republic of Korea.

Because of Jesus Christ, who died for us, we now live our lives for Jesus, our savior, and for the world that Jesus loved. Therefore, through the cross, we find our real mission in life. It is where we find the most valuable meaning in our lives. And through the cross, we find the most essential joy of our lives.

I would like to share two things that personally touch my heart when I think of the cross.

First, the cross gives me power in my life.

The true power of life does not come from our own abilities but from our belief in the power of the cross. I have not found anything more absolute other than God's promise given through the cross of our Savior. Therefore, we need to fill and hold fast in our hearts the affirmed promise of God.

Listen to Romans 8:31-32, "If God is for us, who can be against us? Certainly not God, who did not even keep back his own Son, but offered him for us all! He gave us his Son—will he not also freely give us all things?"

Second, I find humility at the cross.

Jesus, who died for me, also died for others in the same way. The Son of God, who is the most high, died for me, a mere lowlife. Then how is it that I can boast about myself? The cross holds a mirror up to our hearts and helps us see who we really are. Knowing God and knowing man according to the teachings of the Bible makes us humble.

What sort of benefit can we receive from relying and living on the power of the cross? One such benefit is that it is easier to manage and control any anger and resentment when you are disgraced or disregarded. The love and guarantee of the cross comfort and strengthen us.

In these modern times of different cultures and classes, people may experience many types of discrimination. Sometimes, conflict may come directly from within the family boundary, such as disdain from our children or spouse. The good news is that we get strength to overcome such problems from the love and power of the cross. This power is a result of Jesus Christ bearing and removing all of our shame and disgrace on this very same cross.

Before Jesus died on the cross, he cried out, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthami?" which means, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?" (Matthew 27:46). But because Jesus trusted his heavenly Father to take care of him, he was humble enough to give himself up for the world.

Whenever we look at the cross, there are some things we must realize. They are: 1. the pain that the Father God experienced when He abandoned his only begotten son and the deep love He has for us in order to have done that; and 2. the glory of the victory of the resurrected Jesus Christ, who paid for our sin with his sacrificial body and rose from the dead by the power of God! Hallelujah! Amen.

Reflet and Apply of Today's Sermon:

1. When was the last time you focused on the meaning of the cross? What meaning and impression of the cross came to you at that time?
2. Look for at least 10 crosses in any form, on the walls, floor, ceiling, and space of the Sanctuary Hall. Which cross do you like best, and why?
3. Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you want to come with me, you must forget yourself, carry your cross, and follow me." When, where, or through what do you think you are carrying your cross?