

“The Privilege of the Servant”

Kids growing up these days are accustomed to using gaming machines from a very early age. What is it about computer games that they have such an influence on children's emotions? My guess is that they involve the goal of winning. Our joy of winning over an opponent is very attractive, but on the contrary, it is very momentary and gives us a high degree of tension.

Nevertheless, from childhood we learn the psychology of competition, achievement, struggle, ownership, and dominance. The psychology of such self-centered desire grows with age. And it is a cultural norm for such a goal to be desirable and worthy. Eventually, the fulfillment of that desire becomes the goal of life.

When we look at Mark's gospel scripture today, the greatest concern of Jesus' disciples at that time was almost the same as ours. But Jesus set the time and taught his disciples the right view of life and the right faith. Let's find out about it together today.

When we ask, “What is the accomplishment of Jesus coming to this world?” Many people answer that 'Jesus unified the timeline of human history.' But there is something much more important than that. Jesus changed the standards and priorities that we should have.

Throughout history, the world has demanded greatness from every person. As a result, great leaders ruled the world and were respected. Many are trained to become great but are afraid of being unable to become great. But Jesus teaches us to be "little ones."

When facing the criteria with which the world judges us, this teaching of Jesus frankly makes us embarrassed and resistant. This conflict continues until we receive Jesus as our Savior. But remember, there is a clear reason why Jesus teaches us to be "little ones." That is to enable us to live "the life of the servant."

He clearly stated and practiced the purpose of his coming to the world in Mark 10:45: "The Son of Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve. And to save many people, He came to give his life in ransom."

If you were Jesus and you knew the purpose of your life was to sacrifice yourself for someone else, would you want to be born? If you knew you would die a horrific death to save those who hated you, would you want to be born? No, of course not.

There are, of course, many people around us who sacrificially care for and serve disadvantaged neighbors. We acknowledge and respect their humanity. But Jesus presupposed a thorough basic condition for their service and service to those who believe in him. The key phrase is “in my name,” introduced in v. 37.

This includes the purpose of accomplishment through service. When we enter into fellowship with God the Creator through service in the name of Jesus, we enjoy the joy and blessings of all that belongs to him as a family of God. So, through our service, He wants to expand and revive the kingdom of this earth as well as the kingdom of God.

Here, let us think about the "one child" Jesus brought to his disciples. In verse 36 Jesus said, "If anyone accepts one of these children in my name, that is to receive me, and to receive the Father who sent me to this earth."

Who does this “child” mean in our reality today? They can be people who seem to be on a social level that is not suitable for me to deal with. Also, it would be nice to see them as meaning “everyone who is not of interest to me.” They may be in your family, or they may be in your church, or they can be your closest neighbors.

So how can we meet them? We are very interested in, and used to, identifying with whom we can profit. However, when we look around us to spread the name of Jesus and his love, we often experience that they are waiting for us right there. That is, while we are not interested in them, they are invisible to us, but the moment we truly seek to spread the gospel, they become visible to us.

Even if it is a good thing, every action realized through human nature tends to reveal the weak and selfish side of man. However, when we obey Jesus' commands and do good deeds based on His expectations and heart, the sublime imprint of Jesus is left there. Therefore, we always need an attitude to confirm whether the name of Jesus is being witnessed through what we have done.

In Korea, I started the young adult group activities at church, and it had been going on for two years. One Sunday night at church, we had a Bible quiz contest between Class Meetings after worship. Then I saw a young girl. She didn't attend church for almost a year after she failed the college entrance exam. After all the events, I encouraged her to join the young adult group worship, where we met every Saturday.

Surprisingly, she continued to attend the service from the following Saturday and gradually took part in various activities. One day she told me that while herself was in her deep disappointment, the words I counseled her to join the young adult group worship gave her great courage. From the following year, she majored in Social Welfare Studies at the university and later became the wife of a pastor.

Years later, I was surprised to learn that a single word I had given out of simple interest had produced a pastor's wife. In this way, God allows even my small obedience to bear valuable fruit. Of course, she's not Euni. Euni is so much prettier than her, ha hah!

Now let's move on to the scripture of James. Here we compare the wisdom from the earth with the wisdom from above. The wisdom that comes from the earth, as revealed in 3:14, 16, appears as "bitter envy and selfish ambition and disorder and every kind of evil." James classifies this wisdom as belonging to the earth, to the flesh, and to the devil.

We are told these stories from Christians who emphasize true faith these days. Satan says that he changed his strategy as a whole, following the recent wave of changing times. Satan encourages all people to attend church religiously. He encourages them to offer hard work and serve. But the catch is that he encourages us to do so, but not in the name of Jesus and not with the heart of a believer.

Satan wants people to turn their faith life into a hobby for cultivation, a way to pass time, and feel good about self-satisfaction. And He says that you do not think about the blood of the cross but ask them to use the cross for decoration. He resolves that there should be a lot of church members, but not many Christians.

There is widespread wisdom in the earth among the desires of those who want to be the best today. They do not ask God for what they want. It is because they think they can find satisfaction from their own accomplishments.

Relatively, we can see what the wisdom from above is through 3:17. Wisdom is not only pure, but it is also peaceful, gentle, and friendly; it is full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deeds; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy.

Who can use this wisdom? They are those who want to be the last in the world and to serve others in the name of Jesus. For they are the ones who receive God in their hearts. This wisdom is given to us in defeating the devil and approaching God.

At the end of the James text, we discover the spiritual autonomy God has given us. When we submit ourselves to God and resist the Devil, God's power will vanquish the hold Satan has over us. Also, when we rejoice in the Lord and come near God, he will come near to us. Remember that God is omnipotent, but he waits for us to choose good results on our own initiative.

Jesus' purpose in training disciples was not to create political leaders or military mercenaries. Jesus wanted his disciples to mature into those who served the world in accordance with the teachings of God.

Jesus' service for us culminated in his crucifixion. The Father God has made the service of Jesus complete on earth as a sacrifice of atonement to be the eternal resurrection flower that has defeated the power of death and became the savior of humanity.

The Lord allows us to experience miracles every Sunday worship so our weary souls have a new power so we can shake off the world's despair and become filled with the hope of heaven.

At the same time, however, God helps us escape our weak faith, which we concentrate on our lives and get satisfaction there through worship. And from there, He leads us to experience the miracle of the restoration of the privilege of our lives for serving others.

Through service in the name of God, we can experience humility and boldness at the same time, thereby drawing closer to God and closer to salvation.

Do you experience your Lord's presence in your everyday life? God is the almighty creator who made himself a man and came to us first. Revelation 3:20 says, "Behold, I am standing at the door, knocking on the door. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go into him and eat with him, and he will eat with me."

Churches, therefore, put your hands out to Him today. He who eats with Jesus will be given the privilege of courage and joy to serve his neighbor. Amen.

Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:

1) Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be first must place himself last of all and be the servant of all" (Mk. 9:35). Have you experienced disappointment or anger in your service? How have you found relief from that?

2) Albert Schweitzer said, "The only really happy people are those who have learned how to serve." How did you learn to serve? Do you have that joy now?

3) For WCUMC, what service are you providing? What rewards, gratitude, or joy do you experience from it? What service can you begin, regardless of its size or duration?