

**Sunday Sermon 08042024 Psalm 51:1-12 John 6:24-35**

***“The Power of Our Repentance”***

I want to start my sermon today with a question. Do you place greater weight on the taste of bread or on its nutritional value? Many people can choose wheat bread because of its health value. But since almost all flour in the US has been said to be GMO, we cannot afford to worry. I do not know if it is a rumor or a fact, but I just want it to be a rumor.

Then, what kind of water do you drink? Many people drink spring water or filtered bottle water for health. However, a Canadian research institute checked the quality of plastic bottles. As a result, plastic particles were detected in 93% of the bottles of the various brands they examined. With this knowledge, we can never say that we are drinking real, healthy water.

Modern people are more interested in well-being than any other generation. But unlike what we believe, in a highly technologically advanced society like today, people can hardly eat healthy bread and water. It is ironic, indeed.

Of course, we have the right and responsibility to constantly choose the healthiest food and water. But do you know that the Creator has proclaimed from the beginning that a truly healthy life cannot be obtained from material things like bread and water? Then, according to his promise, let's eat the food of life and the living water of eternal life that have no side effects or harmful debris through today's scriptures.

Now, let's immerse ourselves in today's scriptures together. We call God Omniscient and Omnipotent. How wonderful is it that God is omniscient? But it sometimes causes us fear.

David was glad and grateful for the omnipotence of God in the past. To him, God was the weapon of his life and faith. With the help of God, he overthrew wild beasts and defeated the giant general Goliath. He had won numerous wars and had now established his country firmly.

Over the past year, King David was relieved that he had committed the perfect crime. Certainly, there was no one on earth who knew of his evil deed.

But there was someone who knew up in heaven. David seemed to go now from living a splendid life to complete destruction and abandonment in the desert without any bread or drink.

When we choose to sin with our free will, God does not change our decisions. It is because we are "despising" God. Despising God means rejecting God's generosity. However, even at that time, God wants to help us with his omniscient character.

Through the prophet Nathan, God helped David to realize and acknowledge his sins clearly and honestly, so he confessed that "he sinned against the Lord." Did God help David because his nature was good? No. It is because of the holy promise God gave him. He brought David out of the despair of crime and opened the way to life so that he could fulfill his promise.

The book of Ezekiel 33:11 says, "I, the Sovereign Lord, am the living God; I do not enjoy seeing sinners die. I would rather see them stop sinning and live. Israel, stop the evil you are doing."

What happens when we repent? Our repentance breaks down the power of the devil and his power to accuse us before God as sinners. Repentance makes us free from the oppression of sin. Repentance allows us to experience the joy of forgiveness that has been given to us through the cross of Jesus. As we are in the promises of God as children of Jesus, remember that we can receive forgiveness and victory through repentance.

After David had sinned, God proclaimed the punishment of sin to him. Of course, the punishment for sin is terrible and frightening. But if we ask for the protection of God, we must know that the punishment of any sin cannot deprive us of God's comfort and protection. There is always a new way of life in God. The way is opened to us through our repentance.

Psalm 51 is David's psalm of repentance and prayer. Through his prayer, let us consider what "repentance" is. First of all, repentance is acknowledging that I am a sinner destined to die (v. 5). David's confession, "I have been a sinner since I was in my mother's womb," reveals the undeniable sinful nature inherent in human beings.

Second, in the despair of my death, I acknowledge that only God has the ability to provide me with recovery (v. 1). Third, I ask the Holy Spirit to take full control of my life (v. 11).

Our true repentance before God is manifested in spiritual fruit. It gives us freedom from the oppression of sin and the gratitude that fills the heart. The basis on which we can bear the fruit of repentance is God's promise. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right; he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing."

David became king, made Israel strong, and enjoyed all the riches and honors of the world. He satisfied the desires of the flesh, even as he murdered those loyal to him. But all he had gained through the world was a trap of death. Without the grace of God's forgiveness, he gave birth to a son, but the son only brought him sorrow.

Here we expect the blessing of grace given to us through Jesus Christ in the New Testament. The words of Jesus in the Gospel of John show us the field where David's prayer was fulfilled.

In the text of the Gospels, Jesus, through his disciples, promised us, "The Son of Man will give you this bread of everlasting life" (verse 27). Let us remember that the Creator God, the Lord of our lives, wants to give us everything in abundance. But in verse 28, Jesus' disciples ask, "What must we do to be doing God's work?" They calculated what they would do, and in return, they would receive the bread of eternal life.

But Jesus answered contrary to the expectations of his disciples, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (v. 29). In other words, eternal life is given to us when we believe in Jesus. Then Jesus says, "God gives the bread of life to those who do his work" (v. 33). Then, the disciples asked Jesus for the bread right away.

Now, in verse 35, Jesus continues his explanation. He said, "I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never be hungry; those who believe in me will never be thirsty." It is not that we get the bread of life and living water in return for the good we have done.

Rather, when we believe in Jesus as our Savior, we receive them as a free gift. That's why Jesus promised, "Whoever comes to me, and whoever believes in me, will never hunger and never thirst again."

Where is the bread that makes people not hungry and the life-giving water that makes people never thirsty? It is only in Jesus Christ. For the bread and the water, how can we keep coming to the Lord and trusting Him? It is made possible through our repentance. Because it reconnects the bridge of fellowship that was broken between the Lord and me due to sin. However, sometimes it is more difficult to repent in front of men than to repent before God.

# One summer day last year, after almost a month, Euni and I went shopping in Rowland Heights. In addition to our daily necessities, we especially needed fresh fruits and vegetables. For the past few days, I have been praying that this drive will be a safe and enjoyable outing. Finally leaving, while I was driving Highway 138, Euni was checking her smart phone. As I was about to pass the interchange of Freeway 215 and 15, suddenly Euni said, "You must go right!"

I responded with laughter and surprise, "I'm going the right way. Why are you all of a sudden ordering me to go in the wrong direction while you're focusing on something else? Should I be driving you to the hospital?" Euni responded immediately, "Sometimes your jokes are so lame. Such jokes come from a lame personality!"

I resented Euni for not accepting my jokes. I apologized sarcastically to Euni and didn't say another word. After that, we went quietly to the Rowland Heights without saying a word to each other.

Euni feels very averse to being criticized by others. Maybe it's because she grew up, as we say in Korea, like a flower in a greenhouse, meaning she was very loved and cherished, maybe too much.

However, I grew up in very opposite conditions: I struggled for survival with seven siblings; I endured the Korean Marine Corps; then, I was a stock manager at a supermarket; then, I was a pastor at an immigrant church. In all those positions, I had become hardened. Maybe that is why I chose to use such inappropriate jokes and forgot how to treat my wife sweetly for a moment again.

We had to sit at the restaurant for lunch. At that moment, I didn't want to make the mistake of missing out on a golden opportunity that was given to me. "Euni, it's my fault. Please forgive me. I'll be more careful with my jokes from now on." We happily shared a delicious lunch of chicken.

That evening, we were able to enjoy and graciously rehearse the praise of our duet. I think it's still much harder to apologize to Euni than to apologize to God. But that's just me. For some, it may be the opposite. We must come to our knees and repent before God, even though it may be difficult.

Let us all always remember the truth that the bread of life and the life-giving water that make our lives the healthiest are provided and guaranteed through our repentance in Jesus Christ! Amen.

***Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:***

1) Take time to meditate on Psalm 51 individually. Ask the Lord to free you from past sins that weigh on your soul, even though you have the assurance that you have already been forgiven through repentance.

2) What elements of your daily life cause you to experience hunger and thirst for the bread and water of life? What are your spiritual attempts to fill them?

3) What are the Bible verses or events that most encourage you to seek forgiveness of sins from the Lord and from others? What situations have been of real help to you?