



Sermon, Sunday March 3, 2024

“Are our hearts united in believing and loving God?”

SCRIPTURE: 2 Kings 10:15-17 ¹⁵ When he left there, he met Jehonadab son of Rechab coming to meet him; he greeted him, and said to him, “Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?” Jehonadab answered, “It is.” Jehu said, “If it is, give me your hand.” So he gave him his hand. Jehu took him up with him into the chariot. ¹⁶ He said, “Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD.” So he had him ride in his chariot. ¹⁷ When he came to Samaria, he killed all who were left to Ahab in Samaria, until he had wiped them out, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke to Elijah.

Introduction: Catholic Spirit

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

We are going through the season of Lent in the church calendar, a time to meditate on the nature of human beings who cannot help but die due to sin, and on the love of God who sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross to solve the problems of sin.

Jesus, who died on the cross, was the one who experienced the abyss of despair more than anyone else in the world. During his public ministry, he taught people about the kingdom of God, cast out demons, healed the sick, and performed various miracles. However, he died most shamefully on the cross due to the betrayal of people. But due to Jesus' complete trust and obedience to God, he was resurrected from death to life. And through this incident, we experienced salvation through God's love and grace.

However, as we spend Lent, there are many people around us who are suffering due to war, poverty, disease, alienation, and prejudice. As disciples of Jesus and as

descendants of Pastor John Wesley's legacy of faith, we have the responsibility to transform the world, yet we don't know how to fulfill our responsibilities.

The text we share today is a very precious inspirational message about how we can love God and love our neighbors. John Wesley used this text to lead a very famous sermon called “**Catholic Spirit**”. The term “**Catholic Spirit**” spoken by Wesley in this sermon does not mean Roman Catholicism as a religion, but rather “**universal love, or catholic love**”.

The salvation of the world and the transformation of society, which God achieved through the death of Jesus on the cross, can be accomplished through love. And this attribute of love contains the spirit of tolerance, inclusiveness, and unity. I hope that through today's text, you will gain insight into how love can bear abundant fruit through cooperation and unity rather than division.

Body: Are our hearts united in believing and loving God?

To understand today's text, an understanding of Israel's history is necessary. Israel was divided into Northern Israel and Southern Judah after the death of King Solomon. However, unlike Southern Judah, which was recognized as the successor to God's covenant through the “**Davidic Covenant**,” the Northern Kingdom of Israel had weaknesses in its legitimacy. So, to strengthen their legitimacy, they



used the “**spirit of the Exodus**” as the basis of their legitimacy, but they could not completely overcome the weaknesses in their legitimacy. Because of this, many political coups took place in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Today's text is based on the process in which the Omri dynasty, represented by King Ahab and his wife Queen Jezebel, the evilest in the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was destroyed by Jehu. According to 2 Kings chapter 9, Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat and the grandson of Nimshi, kills the kings of both Israel and Judah and takes power.

Jehu's extermination of the descendants of the Omri Dynasty is described by the writers of the Book of Kings as a conflict between the faith of Jehovah and the faith of Baal. (2 Kings 10:18-28) Our text today is a conversation between Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, whom Jehu met in the process of executing the descendants of the Omri dynasty.

So what kind of person is Rechab's son, Jehonadab? Jeremiah 35:5-6 describes the descendants of the Rechabites experienced by the prophet Jeremiah as follows: **“Then I set before the Rechabites pitchers full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, "Have some wine."(v.5) But they answered, "We will drink no wine, for our ancestor Jehonadab son of Rechab commanded us, "You shall never drink wine, neither you nor your children (v.6)”."**

In this way, the Rechabites were people who strictly observed the **“faith in Yahweh.”** In contrast, Jehu took the lead in eradicating the Baalism of the Omri Dynasty. However, he did not stop the sin of serving the golden calves of Bethel and Dan, which was a weakness of the northern Kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 10:29).

However, in today's text, Jehu asks Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, **“Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?”** And to Jehu's question, Jehonadab answers **“It is.”** Then Jehu said to Jehonadab, **“If it is, give me your hand.”** What can we discover from this short conversation?

In fact, from Jehonadab's point of view, it is not easy to join hands with Jehu, who shows some religious imperfection. Also, from Jehu's perspective, it was not easy to pursue a common goal with Jehonadab, who had a firm and stubborn religious orthodoxy. However, instead of condemning the other based on their religious convictions, the two join hands for a common goal. The common goal of the two is based on **“Are each other's hearts in the right relationship with God?”** In other words, this means, **“Do you truly love God and your neighbors?”** It also means that, despite some differences, if what we want is to restore love for God and neighbors, let us do it together.

But what does our life look like in reality? We are often not free from the prejudices in our minds. And when it comes to thoughts and actions that are different from our own, we may not be able to acknowledge or accept the differences. Furthermore, we force our thoughts and actions on others. Therefore, there are many cases where we do not love God and our neighbors properly. But we have ways to overcome these weaknesses. It is about cultivating **“the spirit of tolerance and unity” in love.**

Therefore, John Wesley said, **“Doctrinal and religious positions and choices must be determined according to the conscience of each believer, and he must be able to explain his choices before God.”** He was also proud that **“his faith and expression are most consistent with the early church and apostolic tradition.”** **However, he was strongly wary of these convictions and beliefs being used to force exclusive and self-righteous doctrines and norms on others.** We must remember that John Wesley practiced the love of Christ with a firm belief in his own faith while acknowledging differences from others.

However, many tragic events constantly occur around us because we are unable to overcome these differences. Some people hate Muslims and are hostile towards Jews. In other words, we often force ourselves to be right rather than to tolerate people of different religions, races, cultures, and languages.



What we must clearly understand is that just because someone has a different opinion from us does not mean they are wrong. If we reject someone based on our convictions and beliefs, this goes against the love and tolerance of Jesus. Furthermore, it is not the Lord's will to condemn our neighbors based on our own confidence and faith.

Let's go back to today's text.

In today's text, Jehu says to Jehonadab, **"If it is, give me your hand."** This is not just asking the other person to be on my side or agree with my will. This is to ask you to help me entrust myself more to the Lord through your prayers. Furthermore, this is to ask you to encourage and challenge me so that I can love my neighbors with deeds and sincerity.

As Christians in this world, we can change the world through love by working with people who have different denominational identities, non-believers, people of different religions, and people of different races, nationalities, languages, and cultures. Of course, this process has many difficulties and challenges. We may be caught up in the desire to force our thoughts and actions on others because we are right. Also, due to a misunderstanding of tolerance and inclusiveness, we may give up or lose the most precious thing we own.

But practicing love through universal love does not mean we have to become gray without our own distinct color. If we truly know the essence of the gospel of Christ, we can love our neighbors as we love ourselves through the full power of the gospel. We can also love God with all our heart and sincerity.

In this huge society we live in, the United States, there is tremendous diversity. Although we do not have to accept all diversity as our own, we are confident that the Holy Spirit will be with us in our ministry as we practice love in cooperation with our neighbors in the universal love and under the light of the Gospel of Christ.

Conclusion: Jesus who cares and loves people

Now, let's summarize today's message. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

John Wesley believed that all of God's children should be united in love, even if we have minor differences. Wesley believed that although we may have differences, we can overcome these differences through love and good deeds toward God and neighbors. Can you agree with Wesley's thoughts?

We are now going through the season of Lent. As you experience Lent, I hope you meditate deeply on the sacrifice and love of Jesus. As you and I recognize, the love the Lord has given us is so great. However, there are many people in our society who still live in pain and alienation.

Please remember! Jesus was a person who truly cared for and loved people. Jesus did not hesitate to be a friend to tax collectors and sinners.

We must keep in our hearts not the Jesus who is confined by doctrine, but the Jesus who laughed and cried among people and sacrificed everything to open a world where people are treated well. I pray that we will all be filled with the love of Jesus. Amen!

