



Sermon, Sunday March 19, 2023 “Antioch Church”

SCRIPTURE: Acts 13:1-3 ¹ Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Introduction: Small Devotion Brings Big Fruit!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Today is the fourth Sunday of Lent. May we all have a deeper fellowship with the Lord during Lent. Today, missionary Chris K. Choi, who is doing school and hospital mission work for pygmies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo & Rwanda, has prepared a mission report to share on the African pygmy tribes.

Before I came to the United States to study in 2011, I completed my Master of Divinity degree in South Korea and received a Theology master’s degree in Church History. The school where I studied church history is Yonsei University. Yonsei University's academic position in South Korea is like that of Yale University in the Ivy League in the United States. Today, Yonsei University is not only famous in South Korea, but is also a prestigious school where students from all over the world come to study. Yonsei University is a research-oriented university located in the heart of Seoul, the capital of South Korea, with two very modern campuses outside of Seoul. I am not bragging about Yonsei University, rather I wish to share that the school was founded by American Presbyterian missionary Horace Grant Underwood. (July 19, 1859 – October 1916). Missionary Underwood's dedication yielded tremendous results.

When did the Christian gospel enter the Korean Peninsula? Korean Protestantism recognizes Easter Sunday on April 5, 1885, when two missionaries, Underwood, and Henry Gerhard Appenzeller, officially entered Jemulpo (currently Incheon Port) on the Korean Peninsula, from the standpoint of ‘traditional theory’, as the start of Korean Protestantism. However, from the standpoint of ‘independent acceptance theory’, which is not traditional, some view 1876 as the beginning of Korean Protestantism, when four young Koreans who wanted to read the Bible and become Christians in Manchuria (Northeast China) were baptized for the first time.

In fact, many missionaries of various denominations were active in Korea before Presbyterian missionary Underwood and Methodist missionary Appenzeller arrived in 1885. However, because the influence of missionaries Underwood and Appenzeller is so great in the history of Korean Protestant Christianity, their missionary work is regarded as especially significant.

Compared to Protestant missions, the introduction of Roman Catholicism to Korea was 100 years earlier. The introduction of the Roman Catholic Church was introduced by Korean Confucian scholars who became Catholics themselves in the process of exploring Western books, and through the missionary activities of French and German priests. Of course, the introduction of Christianity into Korean history has a long history, many centuries earlier than the one mentioned above, but it was at the time introduced above that the introduction of Catholicism and Protestantism bore great fruit.

As mentioned above, I studied church history. I studied church history written from a Western perspective, but I also studied and looked at the history of the world church from a non-Western perspective. In that sense, there are some limits to the process of spreading the gospel by missionaries of different races, cultures, languages, and customs. And it is true that there are negative aspects of missions. Nonetheless, most missionaries were obedient to



the word of the Lord and were zealous and dedicated. And the dedication of such missionaries has borne amazing fruits of the gospel.

The Protestant Church in the United States had a profound influence on the formation of the Protestant Church in Korea. Today, churches in Europe are on the path of decline, and many churches in the United States are also facing tremendous challenges amid the wave of secularization, but God is carrying out world missions through those who obey His Word. And, as a model of the missionary church, He tells us of the Antioch church.

Body: Antioch Church

The Antioch Church is the first church to send out missionaries and originates from the Syria region which is 300 miles (480 km) north of Jerusalem. What kind of church was the Antioch church described in Acts 13? The Antioch church was the first church established among the Gentiles (Acts 11:20-21). And the saints were first called Christians in the Antioch church (Acts 11:26). Also, when the church in Jerusalem faced a difficult situation due to a famine, they helped. Above all, the Antioch church was the first church to send out missionaries.

The author of *The Mission of God*, Christopher J. H. Wright (born 1947, who is a missiologist, an Anglican clergyman, and an Old Testament scholar) says; "**Mission is according to God's call and command, in God's own work, and means a devoted participation in the redemption of God's creatures.**"

Is mission the salvation of souls or of society? Today's Christian mission has both aspects of soul salvation and social salvation. In this sense, the Antioch church can be said to be a model of a church that practices the above two aspects very well.

First, the Antioch church was a church that sincerely worshiped the Lord. For the church community to play the role of saving souls or saving society, it must have inner fullness. True worship toward the Lord is the foundation upon which the church can achieve salvation of souls and society. This inner fullness made the Antioch church members' differences of origin, race, and cultural background focus on one purpose to fulfill the Lord's command. Worship focused on the Lord leads the members of the Antioch church to respond sensitively to God's voice. So the Antioch church obeys the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, despite their weakness, the Antioch church ordained Paul and Barnabas for the Gentile mission and sent them out as missionaries. Due to the dispatch of the Antioch church, the gospel was preached to many people.

Conclusion: Jesus' Great Commission

Now let's summarize today's message. **Matthew 28:18-20** says, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" Also, **Mark 16:15** says, "**Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.**"

The Great Commission that Jesus gave to his disciples is to go to the ends of the earth and command them to make disciples. The church must be able to respond to the Lord's command, whether it be in the local community where we are, or in a missionary field in need of urgent relief and help.

Please consider the fact that I am standing before you today as a pastor because of the missionary seeds that Missionary Underwood sowed in Korea 138 years ago. The Lord is accomplishing His amazing works today through the churches of this land. Amen!

Now, for the mission report, I would like to introduce missionary Chris K. Choi, a Presbyterian pastor who is dedicated to working with the African pygmy tribes. Please everyone welcome him with applause.

