



Sermon, Sunday May 29, 2022

“Meaning of Jesus of Nazareth”

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:41-51 ⁴¹ Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³ When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents were unaware of this. ⁴⁴ Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day’s journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him, “Child, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you.” ⁴⁹ He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹ Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them, and his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

Introduction: What it means to become like Jesus

There is a Korean proverb that says, “**When a person is born, send it to Seoul, and when a horse is born, send it to Jeju Island.**” Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is the center of transportation, economy, commerce, and culture. Jeju Island has been the home of horse breeding since ancient times. In other words, this proverb means that for a person to be successful, they must live in an environment that suits them.

Even today, people move in search of good jobs, a good educational environment, and cultural facilities. However, most people go to large cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, not the countryside. Probably because people think big cities offer a lot more opportunities to fulfill our dreams than rural environments.

In that sense, Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, and Galilee, the main stage of Jesus' public life, can be said to be on the outskirts of Israel. Nazareth is a small village in the northern part of Israel. Nazareth is insignificant compared to Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, the beautiful city of Tiberias in Galilee, and Jerusalem, where the temple is located.

The Bible describes the baby Jesus, who was born in a manger in Bethlehem, Judah. Also, the Bible describes to us Jesus who grew up in Nazareth, as well as the three years of Jesus' public life in Galilee, the land of the Gentiles. The Bible also describes Jesus hanging on the seat of sacrifice on the cross, not on the seat of glory as the King of kings.

The Jesus the Bible describes is that He lived a life of marginalization all His life. However, while we say we want to be like Jesus, we want to live a mainstream life rather than the marginalized life of Jesus. To us, today's text tells us what the meaning of Jesus of Nazareth is. So, when we think of Jesus of Nazareth, we contemplate what kind of challenge we face in our own life?



Body: The challenges of faith that the words ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ gives us!

1) ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ reminds us that the Lord sees our heart.

The Lord looks at our hearts, not the outward splendor. In fact, Nazareth is the outskirts of the outskirts. And there is nothing in the world to be proud of. But God chose Mary and Joseph of Nazareth to be the physical parents of Jesus.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, confessed to the angel of the Lord, that she considered herself a lowly maidservant. However, God called Mary, 'the one who is blessed of God.' After all, Christ Jesus was born in the body of Mary. Mary's husband, Joseph, was also a poor carpenter. But Joseph was called righteous in the sight of the Lord. The Lord saw not the outward splendor of the world, but the faith of Joseph and Mary toward the Lord.

In fact, even today, our standards of success in the world depend on how rich we are, how powerful we are, and how much respect we have receive from others. Therefore, poor people who do not meet such standards are in many cases the target of social contempt and marginalization. So, the poor are living with others in the world, but they are not visible to the public. Also, they are excluded from the gaze of the mainstream world. But God, who sees the heart of man, saw the heart of Mary and Joseph, who lived in Nazareth, and entrusted His Son to them.

The case of the Lord looking at the heart of man is also found in the Old Testament. An example is King David, whom Israel is proud of. David's father Jesse and his household did not receive the attention of the prophet Samuel. Furthermore, David was the youngest son of Jesse, not a position that gets much attention from people. But God saw strong faith for the Lord in David's heart. That is why the Lord praises David for being a man after His own heart.

The Bible tells us how the Lord looks at the heart of people. **Psalm 34:15 says: “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry.”**

Also, 2 Chronicles 16:9 says: “For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”

May we too have the wisdom to see the goodness of people's hearts, not just outward splendor. ‘**Jesus of Nazareth**’ teaches us not to be swayed by human judgment, but to live with honesty and integrity before the Lord. What, then, is the second challenge of faith that Jesus of Nazareth reminds us of?

2) 'Jesus of Nazareth' warns us against prejudices created by our experiences.

Let's look at John 1:46. "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. In this phrase, Nathaniel's response to Philip was based on his experience. The region of Galilee, including Nazareth, has been inhabited by many Gentiles since ancient times. The presence of Gentiles in this area dates to the time of King Solomon.

After all, for those who pursued Jewish piety, Nazareth was a far cry from piety.

Philip said of Nathaniel's experience-based response: **“Come and see.”** In these words, **“Come and see”** means that Nathaniel should put down the prejudice he had about Nazareth and come and see Jesus in person. Then, it means that Nathaniel can overcome prejudice and limitations of experience and meet Christ Jesus personally. We need wisdom to overcome prejudices formed by experience. Experience can be a useful life wisdom for us. However, if we become caught up in the prejudices formed by our experiences, we can make the mistake of missing out on something truly precious.



In general, belief is based on common sense, but sometimes it invites us to go beyond experience. And faith gives us greater joys and wisdoms that life experiences cannot give. What is the third challenge of faith that Jesus of Nazareth reminds us of?

3) 'Jesus of Nazareth' reminds us of the joy of the gospel in our present life.

In Acts chapter 26, there is a scene where Paul defends his faith and mission in front of King Agrippa and Governor Festus. **Let's look at the words of Acts 26:9. "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth."**

This verse was spoken in front of King Agrippa about Apostle Paul's experience of his conversion on the Damascus Road. King Agrippa of Acts chapter 26 is precisely the great-grandson of Herod the Great. The Apostle Paul is preaching the gospel based on the experience of his conversion because King Agrippa knew about the Jewish law.

The book of Acts is full of Paul's passion for the gospel. Paul was always striving to preach the gospel regardless of time and place. Thus, Paul used the process of his trial as an opportunity to spread the gospel. For Paul, Jesus Christ was the source of fullness and joy, so he was able to do this.

For us, too, the joy of the gospel is not confined to the past and should not only serve as a hope for the future but should become an area of fullness in the present life. So, Jesus of Nazareth reminds us of the joy of the gospel in the present life. May we all experience the joy of believing in Jesus in our daily lives.

Conclusion: Let's remember the meaning of 'Jesus of Nazareth'!

Now let's summarize today's sermon. When Jesus went to Galilee and called his disciples, Nathanael asked what good thing could come out of Nazareth. Nazareth is a place where, in the eyes of the world, nothing important is going to happen. However, God looked at the hearts of people and chose Mary and Joseph there and entrusted them with His son.

Let us always have piety in our hearts with the Word and prayer. Also, let's try to build a godly life. Let us always be on the lookout for prejudices that our experiences have created. Lastly, let's share the rich fruit of the gospel with our neighbors in our present life. And let us experience the richness of it. I pray such blessings come to all of us. Amen

