



Sermon, Sunday September 1, 2024 “A Holy Life Filled with the Holy Spirit”

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 5:15-20 ¹⁵ Be careful, then, how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to one another, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, ²⁰ giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction: Zeitgeist of the Roman Empire vs. Christian Identity

Today is the 15th Sunday after Pentecost. I had a great holiday with my family thanks to your support and prayers.

Today's text is Ephesians. The history of Ephesus, in what is now southwestern Turkey, dates to the 10th century BC. At the time, Ephesus was a representative city in the Roman Empire and had a population of 200,000 people.

Paul also preached the gospel in Ephesus during his missionary journey. These missionary activities of Paul are described in detail in Acts 19. Later, Paul wrote a letter to the church in Ephesus where he preached the gospel. That is the text from which it comes, Ephesians.

In today's text, Ephesians 5:15, Paul says, **“Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise.”** Paul says in verse 16 what it means to live wisely, **“making the most of the time, because the days are evil.”** This verse means to come to one's senses because the spirit of the Roman Empire at the time was corrupt.

At that time, the Roman Empire colonized many countries along the Mediterranean coast. Through this, the Roman Empire accumulated a lot of wealth, and people's lives became prosperous. Because of this, a culture of pleasure blossomed in the Roman Empire.

During this vacation, I traveled to Rocky Mountain National Park and some of the smaller ski towns nearby. The small towns around the Rocky Mountains were filled with fancy resorts and expensive hotels. Perhaps, if I were rich, I could have stayed in a place like that. These gorgeous facilities are attractive enough to capture our eyes and hearts.

However, it was not the fancy facilities or expensive food that brought peace to my heart. I have experienced peace, joy, and gratitude in the crisp alpine air, skies, green rivers and lakes, wildflowers, hummingbirds, and spending time with my family. I was happy and grateful to experience the wonders of the Lord's created world.

In today's text, Paul appeals that Christians should not be swayed by the spirit of the times of the Roman Empire, which was at the peak of material civilization.

Of course, it was not easy for people at the time to properly understand Paul's appeal. They had a hard time finding reasons why Roman civilization was bad, and they thought they would be left out if they didn't adapt to



it. This is like how many people today believe that although there are problems with the capitalist system, there are more good things about it.

Apostle Paul does not tell us to ignore the reality we face and live our lives. However, Paul speaks of a clear identity about how to live as a Christian.

Body: Two paths to a life filled with the Holy Spirit

Paul expressed what it means to think differently from the people of the world and live with a different spirit in verse 18, saying, **“Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit.”**

Paul says two things in this verse in imperative sentences. First, **‘Do not get drunk with wine.’** When a person is drunk, their rationality is usually paralyzed. In fact, drinking alcohol sparingly is not a big problem, but relying on alcohol to the point of debauchery is a problem. We should not think of Paul’s words, **‘Do not get drunk with wine’**, as simply limited to alcohol. We should think about things that rob us of our souls, like drunkenness. There are many cases around us that follow the flow of the times and live regardless of our religious identity.

The other thing that verse 18 of today’s text points to is **‘But be filled with the Holy Spirit.’** Why does Paul say this? This is because people cannot endure a boring life unless they are filled with something. That is why it is difficult to escape various addictions. Generally, people feel alive only when they are stimulated by something in life. So, people engage in hobbies such as tennis, hiking, dancing, singing, biking, and traveling to be stimulated. Christians also need hobbies to enjoy their retirement and leisure.

However, these hobbies alone do not enrich our souls. Just because our lives are not boring and there are many interesting things to do, our souls do not automatically become rich. So Paul tells us to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Apostle Paul presents two paths to being filled with the Holy Spirit in verses 19 and 20 of today's text. Verse 19 of today’s text says, **“as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts.”**

This sentence refers to worship. At that time, Christians gathered and took turns reading the Old Testament Psalms, the leader of the group explained the meaning, prayed with traditional Jewish prayers, and took Holy Communion. They held these worship meetings regularly. Eventually, this meeting developed into a joint Sunday service.

So, all Christianity has the characteristic of being a worshiping community. However, people living in a secular society may view these Christian worship gatherings unfavorably. They may think that this Christian behavior is a waste of time.

However, a person's soul can become shallow or childish or, on the contrary, holy, depending on what relationship it has with which it lives. If a person associates only with drinkers and gamblers, the soul will be filled with such things.

On the other hand, Christian’s experience things on a different level from what was mentioned above through worship. In other words, Christians stand before a holy being through worship. The holy being that Christians encounter through worship is the one who created the world, who still rules with his unique power, and who will perfect it in the end. He sees our faith and proclaims forgiveness for our sins.

If we approach, feel, and experience such a holy being, our souls will be filled with the Holy Spirit. Do you want to be this kind of person? Do you want your children to be like this?



If you answered, **‘Yes’** or **‘Amen’**, I hope you cherish the worship time more and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit more earnestly. Of course, just because we worship faithfully does not mean that our lives will change immediately. Just as artists consistently practice their violin or painting, if we approach worship with sincerity, we will feel that we have been transformed into people of the Holy Spirit without even realizing it.

So what is another path to being filled with the Holy Spirit suggested by Paul? In verse 20 of today’s text, Paul says, **“giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** This verse says that Christian public worship should extend to all areas of daily life.

People who experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit through true worship develop a heart of gratitude to God even in their daily lives. These people who live their daily lives with a grateful heart to God the Father are more likely to want to offer public worship.

Paul says something very important in this verse. It is giving thanks **‘in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.’** The name of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our thankful hearts and the source of our worship.

Conclusion: A holy life filled with the Holy Spirit

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

What can we be more happy and thankful for than having Jesus Christ with us in our lives? Is there a more holy life than worship Jesus Christ giving us hope called ‘Immanuel’? I hope that we will all move forward to a holy life filled with the Holy Spirit, rather than living according to the trends of the world filled with power, money, and fun, like Ephesus, where the spirit of the Roman civilization completely dominated.

