



Sermon: Sunday, March 9, 2025

“The Meaning of Offering the First Fruits of the Ground”

SCRIPTURE: Deuteronomy 26:1-11 ¹“When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess and you possess it and settle in it, ²you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us.’ ⁴When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, ⁵you shall make this response before the Lord your God: ‘A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. ⁶When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, ⁷we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; ⁹and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.’ You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. ¹¹Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house.

Introduction: Worship God!

Today is the first Sunday of Lent. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, where they were slaves, and led them through the wilderness for 40 years before entering the land of Canaan. Moses told the Israelites many stories related to settling in Canaan. The book that collected them is Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy, Moses’ sermon, contains all sorts of rules and regulations, and today’s text is one of those regulations.

According to the regulations of today’s text, the Israelites were to offer the first fruits of their crops in Canaan to God through a ritual of worship. So why did Moses command the Israelites to worship God in today’s text? (v. 10) It was because the ancient Israelites thought that their survival and life were in God’s hands. They believed that God guided the entire process of the Exodus and the settlement of the Israelites in the land of Canaan. The reason we read the Old Testament today is to learn through the perspective of the ancient Israelites that God governs and rules over history. This is very important to us. Because the difference between a life that recognizes and experiences God and a life that does not is as great as the difference between heaven and earth. That is why the Bible constantly tells us to worship God. However, it is not easy for us to recognize and experience that God governs and rules over history.

Body: God who determines our survival and life

The reason we do not clearly recognize and experience that God determines our survival and life is because we do not confirm it with our own eyes and hands. The ancient Israelites were no different from us. They had difficulty confirming that God was with them, so they turned their eyes to idols. They served Baal, the indigenous religion of Canaan, along with God.



However, we cannot ignore the reality of life. We need material things to live. So it is good for business to do well, and churches also need a certain amount of financial foundation. Also, it is good for Christians to study well, and it is also necessary to gain social status.

Because we cannot turn away from reality and must live. Despite this reality, the reason why the prophets of the Old Testament considered Baal worship to be a sin that must be eliminated above all else is because it ultimately damages our faith in God. If our faith in God is damaged, the foundation of our lives will collapse.

But how could Moses and many of the Old Testament prophets confirm that God is the ultimate foundation of survival and life? It was because they experienced God's presence, His presence with them, and His power in their own history. This is why the ancient Israelites repeatedly wrote their history in the Bible.

To the Israelites, their Exodus and their journey from Egypt to Canaan in the wilderness could not be explained by anything other than the providence of God. They thought that it was God who had done these impossible things. In this way, the Israelites thought that their survival was miraculous.

In fact, even personally, our lives are a miracle. From our birth to now, and after that, until death, everything is a miracle. The entire process of eating, drinking, and living now is a miraculous event that cannot be explained without God. We can only say that all these things in our lives were led by God. I think so, but what do you think?

However, there may be some who think differently from me. First, there are those who see the foundation of our lives as something given by nature, not by God. These people consider themselves to be a part of nature and think that if they live according to nature, their lives will be sufficient. They think that there is no need to bring an invisible God into our lives. I respect the thoughts of these people. However, I do not agree with this thought, because I think that even the principles of nature are under the rule of God.

Second, some people do not accept God as the foundation of their survival based on their unfortunate lives. They think that if God led their lives with good intentions, their lives could not have been ruined like this. It is quite possible to think like this. Job in the Old Testament thought like this in his suffering. However, if we think that we cannot believe in God because of our unfortunate lives, it is proof that we are setting the standard of happiness and unhappiness on ourselves. Job confessed that his thoughts were lacking after experiencing God. Job experienced the hand of life that was more magnificent than his miserable fate through God.

However, it is not easy to experience God's living presence, His presence with us, and His power in history like Moses or the prophets of the Old Testament. So how can we overcome these aspects in our lives of faith?

I think the best way to escape this situation is to restore the spirituality of our worship. This is because the mystery of history in which God's providence intervenes is compressed in worship. It may vary from person to person, but it is good to attend worship at least once a week, even if it is mandatory. It is also good to teach children the habit of worship well. I am not saying that legalistic faith is right now. It is very important for our religious life to experience the fact that the fundamental foundation of our lives is God. And there are various forms and elements in worship through which we can experience God. We must be able to experience the mystery of becoming one with God's existence through worship. This is why all religious practices in Christianity are focused on worship.

In today's text, Moses tells us to worship God, and in verse 11, he tells us to share the joy of worship with **“and you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.”** The following verse 12 mentions the tithe. This is a donation that was given once every three years, and it was used for relief for the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows. This does not mean that relief is simply helping the needy but shows the practice of faith that all are one in God. This clearly shows that our worship of God is connected to **‘love your neighbor as yourself.’**



Conclusion: True Peace of the Soul

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! The times we live in often ignore or find awkward the words to worship God. Instead, the world demands that we worship other things besides God. Jesus quoted **Deuteronomy 6:13**, **“Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.”** I hope that we all take these words of Jesus to heart. I urge you to devote yourself to worshipping God. Then, through God, the source of life, you will obtain life, that is, true peace of the soul. **Amen!**

