

People in Purple

Volume 5

Sermons and Keynotes

Jean Kim

23 Sermons to Christian Churches
32 Sermons to Homeless Churches

FOR

All People Who Experience Homelessness

My Grandchildren

Paul

John

Nina

All Those Who Care About and Serve People Who Have No Homes

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FOREWORD

Every time I revisit the parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8), Jean Kim appears in my mind. I suspect it is the same for many others – maybe Jesus himself. Short in stature and nearing her eightieth birthday, Jean has been pounding on the church’s door for decades, demanding justice for those whom society has forgotten. Wearing her ever present purple *End Homelessness* t-shirt, she would be a shoe-in at any audition for the persistent widow role.

When I was coordinating the Presbyterian Hunger Program “Jean is on the phone” always meant I was about to have a long conversation about homelessness and what we needed to be doing about it. And I would most often agree to what she requested. With her sense of urgency and infinite patience, Jean wears down all resistance.

This collection of sermons that she has delivered over 40 years, documents that persistence. In churches large and small, rich and poor, conservative and liberal, Jean has brought a consistent message about the contrast between God’s love for poor and homeless people and our neglect of them. She calls for action – repentance, actually – and she will not go away without a response.

Tell her that there is nothing your church can do – that you are in the wrong neighborhood, that you don’t have much money, that you are all retired – and she will point to her list of “77 Ways (106 now) Churches can Help” from her *End Homelessness Manual*. Dismissing resistance, she says, “If any church says you cannot do any one of the 77, you may go to see a psychiatrist.”

As Jean acknowledges, her message can be “tough,” challenging us to move beyond our comfort zone of writing checks to actually engaging with our homeless neighbors. But she also brings the authenticity of one who has lived a tough life and emerged with deep faith. The frequent sharing of that personal history gains her an audience willing to hear her out.

But tough and demanding are just one side of the story. These sermons are also informative – often sharing statistics about homelessness “right here in River City.” And they are always very practical – hence the *77 ways (106 now)*. Finally, and quite endearing, these sermons share a sincere appreciation for the efforts that churches are making. At least once we hear her say, “If every church does what you do, we can end homelessness.”

In Volume five, Jean has explored the scriptural foundation of her work on homelessness. In this volume, we see how she has applied that scriptural analysis to build a practical theology of homelessness. Her preaching provides biblically grounded guidance, challenge, and inspiration to both comfortable Presbyterian congregations and communities of homeless people as they gather for worship.

I find the sermons Jean addresses to homeless people to be the most enlightening section of the collection. Many of us who support and encourage the church's response to the needs of poor and hungry people often preach "about" poverty and homelessness. It takes a different skill set, a different sensitivity, and a fuller grasp of the gospel, to preach good news "to" the homeless.

Over forty years ago, while taking part in the Urban Institute's "Urban Plunge" in Chicago, I sought respite for the night at Pacific Garden mission. Attendance at worship was a prerequisite for being offered an invitation to go downstairs for a warm meal and a place to sleep. The preacher – presumably like most who preceded and followed him – ended with an invitation to come forward and be "saved." It wasn't long before several men made their way to the front to pray with the preacher, while the rest of us headed downstairs to eat. At dinner, the men openly talked about how they took turns answering the altar call. "It's the only way to get him to stop," they said, "so we can get down here and eat."

Jean's sermons to the homeless are not that kind of sermon. She clearly knows what most of us have found out in our dealings with homeless women and men: a lack of faith in God's saving grace is not the major issue. Their needs do, however, closely reflect the people whom Jesus met and to whom he demonstrated the good news. Like her savior, Jean addresses these victims of illness, demons and addiction with love and respect. Like Jesus, she often engages them in dialog, treating them like the homelessness "experts" that they are. Reading these sermons, you will often hear echoes of Jesus' haunting question, "Do you want to be healed."

I must note that these sermons reflect their context in community. Jean speaks as a pastor to the flock she has gathered. Close, trusting relationships – or, at least, an in-depth "knowing" in the cases where people had built up impenetrable defenses – sustain an authenticity far beyond that of the visiting evangelist. The invitation to make changes

always comes with the implicit assurance that “we will be here to fight the battle with you.”

These sermons, then, cannot be easily picked up and preached by those of us who occasionally drop into the lives of our homeless neighbors. They do, however, give us a clearer understanding of what is really “good news” to those who struggle with homelessness. This collection belongs on every preacher’s bookshelf. Not because they are sermons to be poached, but because they are ones to be pondered. They raise important questions:

- Is it too bold to speak about “ending” hunger and poverty, or is a lack of faith to speak otherwise?
- Do our sermons ask enough of our listeners? Should we be more persistent in expectation of a response?
- Is the gospel that we proclaim truly “good news to the poor?” Would poor and homeless people hear that way?
- What authentic words of assurance and hope would I share if called on to speak at the funeral of a homeless neighbor?

When Jesus describes the dividing of the sheep and goats at the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 25), we hear him affirming the ones who took “the homeless poor into your homes.” In our security conscious world, that always sounds like a very high bar to clear. Perhaps it is, but I know a woman who can tell you about 106 ways that you can take them into your church, and that’s a good start. These are her sermons; we can all learn from them.

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PREFACE

Are you a church goer or a person in any religion? How many sermons have you heard from the pulpit on poverty/homelessness in the United States? I bet only a few or maybe none. Volume 5 contains 55 sermons I have preached. The motivation to write Volume 5 came about this way: Some years ago, I led a preconference on homelessness issue. I asked a certain pastor to preach at our opening worship service. He chose Matthew 25: 35-36, 40 as his sermon text.

³⁵I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. ⁴⁰ Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me). What you did it to the least you did it for me.

He chose a very relevant text to our conference theme on homelessness. But he preached a sermon unrelated to the theme of the conference. He wasn't able to relate the text to the conference theme at all. It shocked me and made me realize not all preachers (including me) can preach on all themes, and that many preachers are not clear on what to preach, especially on the theme of poverty/homelessness perhaps because they have no experience or have a lack of knowledge or resources. This realization motivated me to create a reference book of sermons for those who want to see some sermon examples in relation to poverty and homelessness topics, or want some ideas on what to preach. Volume 5 contains 23 sermons I preached to nearly 30 different Christian churches/conferences in 20 different states, and 32 sermons preached to homeless congregations in Seattle – for special occasions such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Thanksgiving, Mother' Day or Father's Day, World Communion Sunday, Black History Month, Anniversary and at the funeral service of homeless persons. My sermons are not the best sermons by any means but I dare to share them with those who want to see some samples. My audiences mainly have been two groups – one is a general Christian Church and the other is a congregation of homeless people. What do I preach to them? To the former, I am compelled to remind them of the compassionate heart of God and Jesus Christ for the poor/homeless and motivate the congregation to follow the model of Jesus for the homeless. Of course, I compliment

them for what they are already doing for the poor/homeless. But then, I bring them to the reality of homelessness in their own town or city and challenge them to move one step beyond toward ending homelessness. To the latter, I attempt to introduce Jesus in the Bible who was homeless, a street minister, healer and a friend for the most downtrodden, sick, alienated, homeless outcasts in his days, in order that my homeless audience may feel closer to this Jesus and find hope in him and be motivated to get up from their destructive life style and behavior, and walk toward self-sufficient life as healthy responsible citizens. Faith is very powerful to do this! What is important when I preach? First of all, a preacher must understand his/her audience, must be clear about the purpose of his/her sermon, the central theme of the Bible text a preacher chooses, and the occasion she/he is preaching at and able to apply biblical meaning to the occasion/reality. When I am invited to preach I always check out the theme of the occasion and audience so that I can preach a relevant sermon. I do an in-depth study of the sermon text (Bible), its spiritual as well as the social, political, economic and cultural context of the text and the people to whom it was written. Then I apply it to the spiritual, social, economic, political and cultural contexts in which we all live in and in which the poor/homeless brothers, sisters and children struggle to survive. My sermons have much room for improvement, so I keep working hard to preach better sermons each time.

In my sermon to a general Christian church, I do not preach a sermon that promises a pie in the sky or introduce Jesus who blesses us with permanent and once-for-all tickets to heaven. Instead, I try to disclose the real Jesus who was never complacent but was poor, emptying of self, giving himself, dying and rising, and who compels us to get up, go and meet him in the homeless. I do hope congregations become able to see Jesus in the face of the homeless and are motivated to serve them whom Jesus identifies with and vice versa. I hope congregations awaken from their one-sided, personal, other-worldly, and spiritually focused Jesus in heaven to earthly Jesus who lived, served, suffered and died for others; and who is still walking with those in a deep valley of dead bones, where he keeps on loving, reviving and serving the homeless. I hope to awaken many congregations that are sleeping in their material complacency and apathy, to the dire needs of our homeless neighbors and cease to blame the poor as responsible

for their poverty and homelessness. I dare hope congregation's hardened hearts may be melted by God's and Jesus' deep compassion and be motivated to open rooms in their hearts and churches to welcome the homeless.

In my sermon to the homeless I try to bring them closer to Jesus by introducing him who was poor, despised and alienated in his time. Jesus, who lived among the poor and the sick, who served them and died with them on a cruel cross. I try to bring this Jesus to their life hoping the homeless will know they are not alone because Jesus who knows all about poverty and homelessness is with them. In doing so, that they may find hope in him and be motivated to get up and walk toward healing and restoration. Instead of using traditional church language, "believe in Jesus and be saved," I try to bring them closer to Jesus, and Jesus closer to them so they can come into his life, be transformed and find their permanent home in him. I hope my sermon will be of comfort and hope-giving as well as a challenge to the homeless to get up and walk because Jesus is walking with them.

Through my sermons to Christian churches or to the homeless, I dare hope to help the haves and have-nots to find the right Jesus: Instead of focusing only on spiritual Jesus the homeless find it hard to relate to and the haves find it hard to convince the homeless, I bring the socio-economic and political aspect of Jesus so haves and have-nots both can relate to him rather realistically.

In short, my approach in preaching is an attempt to bring a holistic salvation to the haves by challenging them to find the right Jesus, "Our Lord and Savior," who grieves and lament to see so many homeless in our midst. He would disturb our conscience so that we can be compassionate to the needy; to have-nots by meeting their spiritual as well as physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs. Also by finding the right Jesus, "Lord and Savior" who identifies with the homeless plights and wants to lift them out of it – to salvation from sickness unto death (homelessness).

I call the mission I am involved with a "healing mission," – salvation. The whole purpose of the mission as well as my sermon is a sincere attempt to undo the damage done by their families, society, church and themselves. Such profound damage led them to this sickness unto death (multidimensional homelessness). According to

Borg, The word “salvation” comes from the same root as “salve,” a healing ointment. Salvation thus has to do with healing the wounds of existence. Wounds of existence are many and deep. Some of these wounds are inflicted on us, some are the result of our own doing, and some we inflict on others. Therefore I love to replace the term “salvation” with terms “restoration, liberation and healing.”

How 55 sermons came about? Over the years, I began to compile my sermons – especially the motivational sermons I preached while I was on a speaking tour (for the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.). The theme of all of these sermons or keynotes included here are in reference to poverty and homelessness. I hope readers understand that after all, I am a pastor for the homeless; I carry them under my wings and in my heart when I preach and write. I hope readers might hear their voice through my voice, and also through their voice hear the voice of Jesus. That is the sole purpose of my preaching, speaking and writing. I hope this Volume can serve as a resource for leaders who preach or teach on the poverty/homelessness themes.

Why am I writing about the poor/homeless? For over 4 decades, as a licensed mental health counselor, social worker and a Presbyterian minister, I have been serving the homeless people in the US. As I approaching 80th birthday, I want to document all my experience, research and knowledge I have for the homeless, whom I call my family before any memory leaves my brain. This is my last gift that I am leaving for this world in hope that they will motivate my children, grandchildren as well as the younger generations coming after me to care for their poor/homeless neighbors around them by learning from my experience in serving them. I dare to hope that this series of five volumes can serve as a resource for individuals, churches, religious communities and teaching institutions that are interested in and concerned about the poor/homeless. I also leave the entire proceeds from these books to and for the cost and related cost for the education and job/skill training of my homeless friends that they may get up and walk toward self-sufficiency and end their homelessness.

I present **definitions and terms** in relation to (physical) homeless issues that are developed by government agencies, and are being used by service providers. I also understand homelessness from multi-dimensional perspective-physical, emotional, social and spiritual. Each volume presents the description of each aspect of these homeless state.

Throughout all five volumes I have used **the poor/homeless** simultaneously as a single concept because all homeless are poor. Poverty is

one of the major causes of homelessness and the poor are at a high risk of being homeless although not all the poor people are homeless.

Why five volumes? For the past 30 years I have been studying, speaking, writing, researching, and compiling resources on the homelessness issues. Summarizing many decades of work, study and experience in one book is so huge that I divide them in 5 stand-alone volumes under different themes in order to present the homelessness issue more comprehensively. Even though the focus of this proposal is on the first volume I have given a brief synopsis of the remaining four volumes in the series to put it in context.

Why the title of these volumes is “People in Purple?” I have been called “Woman in Purple.” I earned the title from people who have seen me in a purple T-shirt every day since 1997. I chose the color purple when I developed a T-shirt with a message, “End Homelessness for all People” as part of the national campaign of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to end homelessness for all people. I have only worn purple since then.

Purple is the liturgical color of royalty and traditionally has been used during the season of Advent. Purple can also symbolize pain, suffering, and therefore mourning and penitence. It is also the liturgical color for the season of Lent: the time when Christians grieve, lament, and repent for Jesus’ suffering, reflect upon their lives in prayer and fasting, repent their personal and corporate sins, and commit to serve the Lord more faithfully. Likewise, in my purple T-shirt, I grieve, lament and repent for having so many homeless people in this affluent country, and commit to love and serve Jesus Christ by serving the homeless and to work toward ending homelessness. Personally it also represents my own pain, suffering and mourning of many tragedies and losses (in Korea as well as in the United States). The color purple has become not only my personal identity but also my homeless mission color. Because the color purple can also symbolizes pain, suffering, and mourning of homeless people who lost everything including their jobs, homes, families, identity, health, pride, joy and hopes, they deserve to be called “People in Purple.”

I hold the pain of my Lord, Jesus, dear homeless friends, and my own deep in my heart. My love for Jesus is my love for the homeless and my love for the homeless is my love for Jesus. As Jesus participates in my suffering and pain, I too participate in his as well as the homeless. Therefore, every day is Lent for me in my purple shirt. My life is a purple life, and I am called the “Woman in Purple.” I call the Great One “Jesus in Purple,” the service I offer “Ministry in Purple,” and my homeless friends “People in Purple.” Thus naturally the title of this book, this series of five volumes, is “People in Purple” because it is their story.

My view, understanding, analysis, interpretation and critique of the homeless issue may be basic but it comes out of my experience of many decades in listening, talking and serving people who suffer from poverty/homelessness. I also quote other scholars' opinions who have enriched me, hoping they will do the same for the readers.

I am deeply indebted to many local and national coalitions and scholars – economist, and theologians – who enriched and supplied me resources on the issue of the rich, poor, and the homeless. I owe huge thanks to Rev. Gary Cook of the Bread for the World and Rev. Jack Wilson, a retired Presbyterian Pastor for writing the foreword for volume five. Heartfelt thanks also to Cathy Roper in Seattle, Washington for proofreading and editing my manuscript of volume five. Huge debts to Steve & Marcy Hong, Mickie Choi (Hoe), Mia Park in California for offering me a room to hide and write. I am grateful to Chan Hie Park, Cecilia Kim, Paul Han, Jasmine Valentine, Shin Hwa Park & Duk Nan Cho, Esther & Hana Na and Suhn Park in California for providing me with ways and means while I was writing away from home. Huge thanks to Nest Mission staff and Board for allowing me to go away to hide and write these volumes, and their support and encouragement. Last but not the least, thanks to my son, daughter-in-law, all my grandchildren, my nephew and his family for their support in numerous ways for this huge work of writing. This means I didn't write these volumes alone. It took a whole community of caring people. Without their support, encouragement and prayer these volumes could have never been a reality. However, above all, it was the abundant grace of God who motivated and sustained me throughout all these years, especially last year while I was writing these volumes.

Brief introduction to volume 1-4.

In Volume 1, I invite readers to understand the meaning of homelessness and the reality and root causes of homelessness in the United States. I identify 43 areas of direct and/or indirect reality and root causes of homelessness. Only one of them is considered to be the personal and the rest are viewed from sociopolitical, economic and cultural perspectives. Also included are my own interview results on homelessness that includes opinions from 50 professional service providers/ advocates, 50 from the general public and 50 homeless persons. I also identify 45 myths and present facts that challenge these myths and our incorrect understanding of

homelessness. I included a brief comparison of the way the United States and Europe deal with poverty issues. The appendix includes my personal testimonies about what motivated me to serve the poor/homeless as an immigrant (from Korea).

Volume 2 is about Biblical (Old and New Testament) studies and/or the theological positions on poverty/homelessness. After learning the troubling truth about how we have created poverty and homelessness in the U.S., readers may now raise a question as to how God sees this reality and if God is happy with the way we do homeless mission in the U.S. Thus, Volume Two is an attempt to discuss that question: what is the biblical position on poverty/homelessness?

I walked through the whole Bible trying to bring to light many deeply hidden insights to poverty/homelessness written in the Bible. The Bible has a multitude of indications of poverty/homeless situations. I reviewed God's and Jesus' position on poverty/homelessness who challenge, warn, indict, and sentence those who exploit and oppress the poor. Then I add St. Paul, James, and John's position on poverty/homelessness. The final part of Volume Two is the critique of contemporary church mission including diagnosis and treatment. I hope that readers' conscience may be awakened to the demand of God. Now after reading about the disturbing reality of poverty/homelessness in the U.S. and the Biblical position of them, some readers might ask "what must I do now?"

Volume 3 is written for those who have read Volume One and Two and might be motivated to develop or be engaged in homeless mission but don't know what to do and where to start. I present 106 homeless mission ideas, large and small, a person or a church can be involved with. A brief description of 106 mission ideas in the form of "Need" (why necessary) and "Mission" (what could be done) is presented. 106 mission ideas in Volume Three come from my many decades of experience of seeing, doing and meeting the needs of the homeless. One of 106 ideas is public policy advocacy. I give an extended separate chapter for it because we won't be able to end homelessness unless there is major public policy change. I also share my own experience in 15 different mission programs which I have served, founded or co-founded from their inception. My experience of serving or starting a homeless mission didn't take much professional knowledge or large amounts money or many people. I always started very small and grew according to the needs of people and volunteers'

availability. After reading Volume Three I hope people no longer ask “What can I do?.” I used to make my audience laugh by suggesting them to go to see a psychiatrist if any church or individual cannot or will not do at least one of them.

Volume 4: For those who read the first three volumes, some might wonder what others are doing and wish to visit some of them but cannot. Thus, in Volume Four I introduce the 155 homeless mission examples that I visited in the United States while I was on my speaking tour (1998-2004).

I hope these five Volumes will be useful in motivating some readers to serve the most downtrodden brothers and sisters in our society, and may serve as a resource in developing many more missions toward ending homelessness.

And in the end of each volume, I add an appendix to share my personal testimonies because many people ask what motivated me to serve the poor/homeless as an immigrant. I confess that all of our life troubles, tragedies, illness and pains can motivate us to do something good for others and society with the help from God. And I also claim that it is my time to share the abundant blessings with the poor/ homeless that I have received in this country, my new home.

I recommend those who are concerned or interested in homeless issues to read all five volumes in order to get the full perspectives of the poor/homeless.

Introduction: Definition and Terms of Homelessness

Definitions of Homelessness: When I speak to churches, I usually ask the audience if anyone had ever experienced homelessness in their life. Very few people raise their hands. Why? Because most people understand homelessness means having physically no place to live or literally being on the streets. But while I was serving most downtrodden people in our society I have learned to understand homelessness from multidimensional perspectives. Therefore, I add other dimensions of homelessness to physical homelessness. Let us first see how our government defines [physical] homelessness.

On May 20, 2009, President Obama signed the Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act. The [HEARTH Act](#) amends and reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act with substantial changes in definition of homelessness:

The term “homeless”, “homeless individual”, and “homeless person” means— (1) an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; (2) an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground; (3) an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing); (4) an individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided; (5) an individual or family who— (A) will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, as evidenced by— (i) a court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days; (ii) the individual or family having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days; or (iii) credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause; (B) has no subsequent residence identified; and (C) lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and (6) unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who-- (A) have experienced a long term period without living independently in permanent housing, (B) have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period, and (C) can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment. Domestic violence and other dangerous or life-threatening conditions.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the Secretary shall consider to be homeless any individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are

jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.¹

Summary: The United States government acknowledges four categories of people who qualify as legally homeless: (1) those who are currently homeless, (2) those who will become homeless in the imminent future, (3) certain youths and families with children who suffer from home instability caused by a hardship, and (4) those who suffer from home instability caused by domestic violence. Lack of Permanent Housing: must have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing at any time during the last 60 days. Persistence of Housing Instability: must have moved primary nighttime residences at least twice during the last 60 days. Presence of an Ongoing Hardship: the lack of permanent housing and persistence of housing instability are expected to continue for an extended period of time due to any of the following six (6) reasons: 1) Chronic disabilities. 2) Chronic physical or mental health conditions. 3) Substance addiction. 4) Histories of domestic violence or child abuse (including neglect). 5) The presence of a child or youth with a disability. 6) The presence of at least two 2 barriers to employment, which include any of the following five 5 barriers: Lack of a high school diploma or GED, Illiteracy, Low English proficiency, History of incarceration or detention. History of unstable employment.²

As I mentioned earlier, I have seen many homeless people experience emotional, social and spiritual homelessness as well. Therefore, I add a term “**emotional homelessness**” because I have seen so many people who are so abused, hurt, broken, and deserted by their families, friends and society. When these people lose the meaning and purpose of life, and being drowned in a “no-good” self-image, hatred, rage, despair and a destructive life style, they can become emotionally homeless. Often times, physical homelessness causes emotional homelessness and vice-versa. They affect one another. Many physically homeless men and women I served were emotional homeless as well. Once people fell in to physical homelessness their motivation, desire and hope to live and move forward are all go down the drain.

Declaration of Trauma Informed Care and other resources illustrate the impact of emotional homelessness as follows: 1) The event of becoming homeless - of losing one's home, neighbor, routines, accustomed social roles, possible even family members - may itself produce symptoms of

¹ The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act As amended by S. 896 The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 [signed by President Obama].

² From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

psychological trauma in some victims. 2) The ongoing condition of homelessness - living in shelters with such attendant stressors as the possible loss of safety, predictability, and control - may undermine and finally erode coping capabilities and precipitate symptoms of psychological trauma. 3) Becoming homeless and living in shelters may exacerbate symptoms of psychological trauma among people who have histories of victimization." ³ Someone said that when the emotional pain is too great to bear a person's mind goes out of their body in to outer world. That is mental illness which can be termed as emotional homelessness.

Kierkegaard calls such deep despair "sickness unto death."⁴ Dr. May, MD calls this despair "a sin; theologically, sin is what turns us away from love - away from love for ourselves, away from love for one another, and away from love for God. The worst sin is losing hope because it denies God who is the source of hope."⁵

Trauma, left untreated, can devastate both the individual and our community: The financial burden to society of undiagnosed and untreated trauma is staggering. Untreated trauma significantly decreases productivity in the workplace, increase reliance on public welfare, and incarceration rates. The economic costs of untreated trauma-related alcohol and drug abuse alone were estimated at \$160.7 billion in 2,000.⁶

I also add **social homelessness**: I see many homeless men and women I serve don't have any family members nearby, estranged by them or spouses or grown children and vice versa. Most of them have no friends they associate with or can count on. When I helped nearly 40 people for free cell phones from government assisted cell phone program. One condition to get the free phone was presenting physical address of self or someone. More than half of them couldn't come up with "anyone" who could allow them to use their physical home addresses. I asked them, "any friend, relative and family members" whose address they could use. Answer was amazing "NO." No one invites them. They have no place to go. They mostly waste time because no one gives them work. They are nowhere and everywhere on the streets. They seem to be very lonely, isolated, alienated, belong nowhere, no body. They are alone, with no one's care and attention. Some, of course, have drinking or drug bodies who often use, abuse and exploit each other. They don't call themselves friends for each other.

³ Declaration of Trauma Informed Care: Homelessness as Psychological Trauma: Broadening Perspective, 1991.

⁴ Soren Kierkegaard. Sickness unto death (Wilder Publications, 2008), 9.

⁵ Gerald G. May, M.D., Addiction and Grace (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 1988), 2.

⁶ The Economic Costs of Drug Abuse in the United States, 1992-1998.

I have a homeless man who waited for low income housing for 5 years and finally got it and moved in. We wanted to shout to the whole world about this good news and have a celebration. At our surprise, he shouted a clear “NO” because he knew that other homeless people will come, use, abuse, exploit his new home and soon he will be evicted from the housing. He was a man with no single friend in this society. He was so abused and trust NO ONE in this world, he said. Millions of people are out there. Huge wealthy society is out there. There are millions of doors of millions of building. But he has nothing to do with them and vice versa. He has no single door he can walk through. He belongs nowhere. These people have fear, mistrust, and hatred toward this cruel society and world. I call this “social homelessness.”

A scholarly concept of Social isolation refers to a complete or near-complete lack of contact with [people](#) and [society](#) for members of a [social species](#):

It is usually [involuntary](#), making it distinct from isolating tendencies or actions consciously undertaken by a person, all of which go by various other names. It is also not the same as loneliness rooted in temporary lack of contact with other humans. Social isolation can be an issue for anyone despite their age, each age group may show more symptoms than the other as children are different from adults. Social isolation takes fairly common forms across the spectrum regardless of whether that isolation is self-imposed or is a result of a historical lifelong isolation cycle that has simply never been broken, which also does exist. All types of social isolation can lead to staying home for days or weeks at a time; having no communication with anyone including family or even the most peripheral of acquaintances or friends; and willfully avoiding any contact with other humans when those opportunities do arise. Even when socially isolated people do go out into public and attempt social interactions, the social interactions that succeed — if any — are brief and at least somewhat superficial. The feelings of loneliness, fear of others, or [negative self-esteem](#) can produce potentially very severe psychological injuries. True social isolation over years and decades tends to be a [chronic condition](#) affecting all aspects of a person's existence. These people have no one to turn to in personal emergencies, no one to confide in during a crisis, and no one to measure their own behavior against or learn [etiquette](#) from — referred to sometimes as [social control](#), but possibly best described as simply being able to see how other people behave and adapt oneself to that behavior. Lack of consistent human contact can also cause conflict with the (peripheral) friends the socially-isolated person might occasionally talk to, or might cause interaction problems with family members. It may also give rise to uncomfortable thoughts and behaviors within the person.

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⁷ From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: Social Isolation.

Some homeless people might have developed social isolation prior to their homeless experience. But many others seemed to fall into social isolation during their homeless life as a result of being robbed, physically sexually and emotionally abused, used, and exploited, and intentionally they cut off all association with people as a man I mentioned above. They usually superficially related to people at meal programs.

Finally I added another dimension of spiritual homelessness. When abused children grow up identifying God with their abusive parents and run away from them and God all together, they can become spiritually homeless. Economic suffering can become the root cause of people's spiritual homelessness when it results in hunger, homelessness, profound hopelessness and despair that make them feel that God punishes and deserts them. Consequently, their life style and behaviors can become destructive to themselves and others and easily walk away from God and their own life and become spiritually homeless. They might also believe the Church and God side with their oppressors when the Church is denying their access to the house of God just because they are dirty, smelly, disheveled and at times act strange. Therefore, the behavior of the church can lead the homeless as well as themselves to spiritual homelessness.

My point is that those who consider themselves as devoted Christians with regular spiritual rituals – attending church, bring offerings, pray, and fast all regularly – can also become spiritually homeless as described in the Scriptures: *I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings and grain-offerings, I will not accept them; take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream* (Amos 5: 21-24): *Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow*” (I s a i a h 1 : 1 7) .

Because we practice all these rituals we think we are acceptable to God but God doesn't seem to think so.

I remember a story that I heard in Florida: One day Jesus was walking down the street. He saw a woman crying outside a church building. He asked “Why are you crying, sister? She looked up and answered, “Because this church wouldn't let me in as I am badly smelling homeless woman.” Jesus replied, “Don't worry, sister, they wouldn't let me in either.” This story reminds us of Matthew 25: 43, 45: Jesus said, “*I was a stranger and you did not welcome me. Just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.*”

According to this verse the church that didn't welcome her refused Jesus as well and can become spiritually homeless; physically in church but spiritually not in God's heart. My point is that even homed, well-to do ordinary devoted Christians too can be spiritually or emotionally homeless depending on what they experience and/or how they relate to God and treat "the oppressed, orphans and widows," who are the homeless people in our day.

After introducing these multidimensional definition of homelessness I ask my audience, "Now, how many of you have experienced homelessness in your life?" This time many raise their hands. Then I add that I myself had been all these places: In a refugee life from North to South Korea and in Korean War I experienced physical homelessness. When I lost a child of age 17, I was so devastated and hopeless that I fell into the dark valley of death with strong suicide ideation asking God to cancel my life, kill me, nullify my existence from this world and abandon me; and when I pushed God away with all my strength I was emotionally and spiritually homeless. This means I am not different from those homeless friends I serve who go through what I went through.

In short, anyone can experience physical or emotional, social or spiritual homelessness one time or another during our life time. It is not just someone else's experience but can be our own too. All four types of homelessness are all intertwined with each other and effect one another.

Terms: I have already mentioned definitions of physical, emotional, social and spiritual homelessness. Now I am going to introduce some terms developed by HUD (U.S. Housing and Urban Development):

Temporary homelessness occurs when individuals have been displaced from their homes for a time but do not stay homeless for long. This could be because of some type of damage to their home such as a fire or natural disaster.

Circumstantial homelessness occurs when a person's circumstances change and he/she loses his/her place of residence. They might have lost a job or had to spend some time in a hospital. These individuals may come to rescue missions and food pantries to get by. They remain homeless for a time, but eventually get back on their feet. Chronic homelessness: A person who is **chronically homeless** is an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition -who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, -OR has had at least four (4) episodes of homelessness in the past three (3) years. In order to be considered chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g., living on the streets) and/or in an emergency homeless shelter. **A disabling condition** is defined as: Diagnosable substance use disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. A disabling condition limits an individual's ability to work

or perform one or more activities of daily living. **Continuums of Care (CoC)** are local planning bodies responsible for coordinating the full range of homeless services in a geographic area, which may cover a city, county, metropolitan area, or even an entire state. **Emergency Shelter** is a facility with the primary purpose of providing temporary shelter to homeless persons. **Individuals** refer to people who are not part of a family during their episode of homelessness. They are homeless as single adults, unaccompanied youth, or in multiple-adult or multiple-child households. **Permanent Supportive Housing** is permanent housing in which supportive services are provided to assist homeless persons with a disability to live independently. **Persons in Families** are people who are homeless as part of households that have at least one adult and one child. **Safe Havens** provide private or semi-private long-term housing for homeless people with severe mental illness and are limited to serving no more than 25 people within a facility. **Sheltered Homeless Persons** are people who are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or safe havens. **Transitional Housing Program** is a type of housing where homeless people may stay and receive supportive services for up to 24 months, and which are designed to enable them to move into permanent housing. **Unsheltered Homeless Persons** include people who live in places not meant for human habitation, such as the streets, campgrounds, abandoned buildings, vehicles, or parks. **PIT (Point in Time) Count** is an unduplicated one-night count or estimate of sheltered and unsheltered adults, children, and youth. The purpose of the PIT is to help communities understand the number and characteristics of homeless people on a single night. Communities use the data as a barometer to organize responses to homelessness and make decisions on the allocation of resources. According to the annual report of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1/3 to 1/2 of the homeless population has a chronic illness, and the average life expectancy for a homeless adult is 42-52 years.⁸

CAUTION: Overall, the PIT count does not represent all those who were homeless and cannot be used to indicate the number of homeless people in any given community. HUD's other key report, the Annual Homeless Assessment Report, identifies a higher number of people who are experiencing homelessness. The PIT only shows the number of people being served by a portion of the homeless system and those counted as "unsheltered" (i.e., on the street, in parks, etc.). It misses scores of people who are living doubled up, youth living on the streets, and other homeless individuals in places not easily found. Weather, budget cuts that reduce emergency and transitional housing beds, the number of people turned away from shelter because the shelter is full, and the number of volunteers doing the counting, inconsistent data collection methods, and other events can also influence the count positively or negatively. Readers should also be aware that the overwhelming majority of those who were homeless in 2007 are not the same people who were homeless in 2010. The PIT count does not make this distinction.

⁸ Resource: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

The ThinkProgress article quotes Maria Foscarinis, (01/23/2014), "Communities have a lot of discretion in how they carry out these counts...so that can account for a lot of difference." The "street" part of the count tries to measure unmet need by counting people in places "[not meant for human habitation](#)," such as streets, parks, alleys, subway tunnels, all-night movie theaters, abandoned buildings, roofs, stairwells, caves, campgrounds and vehicles. HUD sets the guidelines, but communities have discretion in how they count. A few use sophisticated statistical methods. Most simply organize volunteers to fan out and make judgments about who is homeless, avoiding locations where they feel unsafe. Local policies can also affect the count. For example, [cities are increasingly making it a crime to sleep in public places](#). If the street count goes down, is it because need is down or because there is greater cause to fear arrest, driving people further into hiding? Similarly, in some cities, [families seeking shelter](#) can be threatened with removal of their children; families living outside have extra incentive to avoid detection. To its credit, the [Obama administration](#) has made a commitment to ending homelessness and, to measure progress, it needs data. Methods pioneered in [New York City](#) that statistically adjust for the built-in inaccuracies of the "street" count could significantly improve it. But the data must not only be accurate; they must also be the right data, and that's the larger issue. Homelessness happens over time, not on a single night — and it reflects a deeper crisis. According to [Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies](#), low-income households suffer an unprecedented housing cost burden, forcing many to choose between rent and food. Too often, homelessness is the result. Another reason to doubt HUD's reporting: On Thursday, the Department of Veterans Affairs released statistics showing that [homelessness among Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans](#) is sharply rising despite new efforts to help them. Ending homelessness requires closing the gap between the need for housing and its availability. It requires recognizing housing as a basic human right, and enacting policies to ensure it is available. Homelessness can and must be ended. But it won't be if our leaders report that there is no crisis.⁹

⁹ Maria Foscarinis, a lawyer, is executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty.

Part One: Sermons to Christian Churches

1. Communion Service: Delivered at Broadmoore

Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, CA. (March 7, 1999)

Scripture texts: John 6: 1-11, 51-56

Sermon theme: "Do this in remembrance of me."

INTRODUCTION:

Thank you for inviting me to deliver a message at this meaningful Communion Sunday. Greetings from General Assembly; Special thanks to Presbyterian Women of this church, and those who made the Presbyterian Hunger Grant, Birthday Offering, and Thank Offering possible.

I have seen many wonderful programs throughout the nation that are accomplished by those grants. For those of you who do not know yet, let me report to you that General Assembly adopted "ending homelessness for women and children" as a denominational policy. The Women's Ministry Program moved this policy into action by commissioning me to travel throughout the United States to raise consciousness and motivate Presbyterians to do act to end homelessness.

I chose the Jesus' feeding account in John. This text is reported in all four gospels. It is known to be a miracle story as well as an Eucharistic account. My sermon theme is "Do this in remembrance of me."

Let us look at the socio-economic and political context of Jesus' day: Palestine was ruled by the Roman Empire. For Jesus, it was a grieving time for the death of the John the Baptist. Economically Galilee was poor. Galilean streets were full of beggars, the sick, lepers, widows, orphans and Gentiles. Slavery, uproars, suppression, persecution and mass murder were common. Galileans were exploited by Jewish leaders as well as the Romans with high taxation. There were

many people who were not only financially poor but felt alienated and lonely.

The time was the Passover season. The setting was on the mountain or wilderness, there were no restaurants or grocery stores available. The audience was a large multitude, 5 thousand men not including women and children, who kept following Jesus all over. They could have been with Jesus at least for several days listening to him and being healed by him.

Ever since Jesus told his disciples at the Last Supper to break bread and drink from the cup in remembrance of him, we share communion to remember Jesus. **Remembrance** of Jesus is more than just a mental activity. For example, for God to remember Noah in the ark meant ending the flood. God's remembrance of Rachel meant opening up her womb to conceive her first child. For Hebrews, remembering Sabbath meant keeping the Sabbath Day. For Israel to remember their days in Egypt as aliens meant treating other aliens justly. For St. Paul, remembering his experience on the Damascus road meant witnessing to the gospel and giving his life for it. Therefore, when Jesus requests us to celebrate this meal in **remembrance** of him, he is not only asking us to share meal but also **to do** what the bread and cup meant – put the remembrance in to action.

What can we remember from this particular text?

We remember "*a large crowd*" which Jesus encountered Some of them could have been weary, sick, hungry men, widows, children, outcasts, aliens and homeless who needed love, acceptance and, healing. Other gospels say that in Jesus eyes, they looked like sheep without a shepherd. In other words, they looked lost, helpless, weary, hungry and ...homeless. In that large crowd we see our contemporary homeless crowd who have no place to sleep tonight; some have children with them; some are physically and emotionally abused, broken, lost and weary.

They represent our large crowd of 3 million homeless in this country. They are the 12,000 homeless crowd in San Francisco, your town. They are the crowd of 157 homeless who died of cold, hunger and illness last year in San Francisco. They are the crowd of homeless men, women and children whom the city of San Francisco wants to dump, sweep away or throw away as February 7th San Francisco

Examiner reported. As we remember Jesus' multitude, do you see the large crowd of homeless women, men and children coming toward you and your church?

We remember Jesus' *compassion*. Without compassion he couldn't have done what he had done; sitting, eating, walking with, and feeding, healing and saving the hungry, sick, naked the abandoned outcasts in his days. According to, Professor Marcus Borg, a Jesus scholar, *compassion* means to feel as God feels and to act as God acts in a life-giving and nourishing way. He further asserts that Jesus' compassion stood in contrast to the rigid social boundaries of the Jewish social world; boundaries between righteous and outcast, between men and women, between rich and poor, between Jew and Gentile. Therefore, to advocate compassion as a value, we must stand against hatred, abuse, brutality, injustice, indifference, selfishness, self-righteousness, hardness of heart, racism, sexism, classism, and militant nationalism. Remembering Jesus' compassion means we too must have the same compassion toward the 12,000 homeless crowd of our day in San Francisco and do what Jesus did.

We remember Jesus' *table*. Eating together or "table fellowship" was one of the central characteristics of Jesus' ministry and in the biblical tradition. Jews did not want to eat with these people because they were considered unclean. They criticized Jesus for sitting and eating with sinners, tax collectors and outcasts. For Jesus to sit and eat with them meant unconditional acceptance of them. Remembering Jesus' table with the large crowd urges us to prepare the same table for the poor and homeless in our own city, country and neighborhood.

We remember Jesus' *abundance principle*. When Jesus asked Philip to feed them, his question was "Where are we to buy bread for this big a crowd to eat"? Philip's comment was "6 month's wages would not buy enough bread for this size of crowd." Phillip might have whispered under his tongue, "Jesus, are you out of your mind? The disciple's response was "we don't have any." In other gospels, they suggest to send people away to solve their own hunger problem. While Phillip didn't know what to do, one of his disciples, Andrew, brought information of a little boy who had five little loaves of bread and 2 fish. What anybody can do with only five little loaves and 2 fish except the boy can eat them all by himself.

We can remember three things here. First, the little boy was able to let go of the little lunch he brought for himself. Second, Jesus gave thanks for what he had and entrusted the rest into the hands of God to fill the rest. I want to call this Jesus' abundance principle that Jesus trusted in God's abundance. Third, when Jesus' disciples faced with the crowd's hunger issue, they immediately responded from their Scarcity Principle saying, "we don't have any." According to Scarcity Principle nobody ever has enough: According to the disciple's scarcity principle, their funds or what they had were too little and the crowd was too large for them. In Abundance Principle, we recognize abundant blessing, we believe there is enough.

The disciple's response reminds our own response, which is the scarcity principle. When we discuss with our own pockets, we never have enough. But when we discuss with God's pocket, it is always full, and God is always willing to bless those who know how to let go what we have and trust in the will of God. We must remember that the scarcity principle makes us avoid problems while the abundance principle tries to own the problem instead of passing the buck to someone else. Like the little boy in the text, we must learn to let go of what we have, and entrust our fear of not having enough into the hands of God.

Our problem seems to be that we keep blessings for ourselves instead of sharing them with the needy like the little boy did. We must remember that our greed turns the abundant blessings into scarcity. Colossian 3:5 says greed is idolatry. According to scarcity principle, we say we have little energy and lack of human resource. According to abundance principle we believe any project starts with ONE committed person. Energy and commitment are contagious spreading like fire. Does it matter who is that one person?

I remember I had empty hands when I started the homeless women's church in Seattle. All I had was my enthusiasm, commitment and time on week-ends because I was working full time. Having the equivalent of five loaves and two fish, praying, "Lord, I am coming to you with the little I have." Lo and behold, God provided. The program grew to serve thousand different women per year and from 0 to several thousand supporters. From 0 budget to \$100,000.00 annual budget in five years. I knew there was an abundance of resources out there.

People just needed to be informed of a good cause for which to share their blessings for.

Whenever we bring all we have, miracles happen. All we have can be our money, time, energy, talents, skill, love, compassion, willingness, service, knowledge or wisdom.

We remember the *bread and fish*: Bread and fish presented here are more than literal food. John presents Jesus as the true bread and life for the world. Jesus said "eat my flesh and drink my blood," and if not, you have nothing to do with me. When we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we eat his thinking, ideal, value and way of life. They become the nourishment for our body and soul and become part of ourselves. And then, we become like Jesus, think like him, act like him and serve like he did. For the first century church, to remember Jesus at the Lord's Table meant helping the poor. The earliest reported Eucharist included the presentation of cheese, milk, and honey for distribution to the needy. There was no needy among them because they held everything in common and shared with the poor.

For us today, Jesus' food and drink represents, life, shelter, health, pride, dignity, family, job, unconditional love, home and salvation. Can we, the church, be the bread and life for the world, especially for those who are poor, naked, hungry and homeless to eat and drink?

Remembering and eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood given for us, we the Presbyterian Church must become shelter, home, health, pride, dignity, family, jobs and love for the homeless. In this Lent season, remembering Jesus means we live his values, and think and do as he did, especially for the poor neglected brothers and sisters in our society. Jesus is telling us, "do these things, in remembrance of me." Remembering what Jesus had done for us, let us partake of communion this morning. Amen.

2. Sermon at First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, NC.

March 14, 1999, and Chipley Pres. Church (Chipley, FL), Calvin presbytery, (Springfield, MO), Broad Street Pres. Church (Columbus, OH), First Presbyterian Church (Jacksonville, FL), San Francisco Presbytery meeting.

Scripture texts: Luke 4:18-30; Matthew 4:12-17

Theme: What Jesus Would Say?

Greetings: Thank you for inviting me to deliver a message this morning. Rev. Barbara Dua sends you her love. I bring special thanks to those of you who made the hunger grant, mission grant, birthday and thank offering grant possible. I have seen many wonderful programs throughout the nation that were only possible with these grants from the Presbyterian Church.

For those of you who did not know, the Presbyterian General Assembly adopted two overtures to end homelessness for women and children as a denominational initiative and policy.

Women's Ministry Program, headed by your Barbara Dua, moved this initiative into action by sending me out to the whole nation to motivate Presbyterians to take action to end homelessness.

Let me also share with you that I am a product of U.S. Christian mission to Korea and am one of many rescued in Korean War by the sacrifice of U.S. and U.N. soldiers. This is my turn to do something for the suffering people in this country. Therefore, I was able to devote most of 30 years of my life for the homeless since I came to this country.

Introduction: Homelessness can happen to anyone:

I would like to begin my sermon by saying that homelessness doesn't exempt any of us. *Anybody* can be *physically* homeless when we don't have any funds to pay rent. *Anybody* can be *emotionally* homeless when we are so hurt, broken and damaged that we can be completely alienated from self and others. *Anybody* can be *spiritually* homeless even when we have homes, wealth, jobs, pride, faith and hopes but do not live according to the teaching of Jesus Christ and alienate ourselves from God. I confess that I have been all these three places.

1. Jesus social world:

In order to hear what Jesus is saying and have it make sense to us, we need to know the social and political world where he founded his mission. Before and after Jesus' life, the Romans controlled Palestine. The Jerusalem Temple, scribes, priests, rabbis and elders had turned into collaborators with the Roman Empire. The Jerusalem Temple was so corrupt it was turned into a tax collecting business centers. The Jewish people were exploited and oppressed. Under Roman rule, ordinary people were forced into slavery. Robbery,

uproars, suppression, persecution, and mass murder were common. Jesus began his ministry at this crucial and difficult time.

2. Let us look at how what Jesus is saying applies today.

Luke 4:18-30 is known as Jesus' inauguration speech. In his speech Jesus spoke to an oppressed crowd, "the poor, blind, prisoners, and captives." Holding these people in his heart, he read Isaiah 61 and announced that he was the Christ, God's servant, who brought good news of liberation and restoration to the poor, blind and oppressed. By this first public speech, Jesus disturbed the Nazareth synagogue, his hometown church, so much that he was almost killed because he included Gentiles in his kingdom. Jewish people at the time considered the Gentiles dogs.

In Matthew 4: 12-17, the arrest and murder of John the Baptist indicated the political climate of Jesus' day. It tells us that the streets of Jesus' first mission site were full of the sick, lepers, widows, orphans and the homeless. It was called Galilee of the Gentiles— the people who sat in darkness and shadow of death.

3. How about today?

We are not occupied or exploited by any foreign powers. The U.S. is the most affluent and powerful nation in the world. Many of us rejoice the national economic boom. Many of us are given lots of opportunities. Most of us live in the most luxurious, most convenient, most comfortable life on earth and under the sun.

Despite this wealth, we have 3 million homeless in the United States. One out of four homeless is a child. More than 500,000 lower-income households in North Carolina have housing problems. Children are the fastest growing population at North Carolina emergency homeless shelters. Nearly 12,000 elderly households have incomplete plumbing, a contributor to health problems. More than 19,000 do not have telephones. 6,000-8,000 North Carolinians with HIV and AIDS and are either homeless or in imminent danger of becoming homeless. Yet North Carolina can offer only 114 beds for homeless AIDS patients.

Homelessness for women and children often means assault, robbery or rape. Homelessness for them is crisis and emergency just like hurricane, tornado, fire/flood. Homelessness is a place of horror;

it is a place for the dead, not for the living. Even the dead has a little space to lay their body down, but not the homeless. Many homeless have to die to find a little space to lie down peacefully.

Many *homeless* youth are victims of rape, incest, or violence in their own homes. Some are "throwaways" by their parents. Many often find the streets a better alternative than their abusive homes. Once on the streets, homeless youth turn to prostitution and crime to support themselves, and the vast majority abuse drugs and alcohol. There are more shelters and programs for men and not enough for women and children. People I mentioned above are those who sat in the darkness or shadow of death in North Carolina.

4. Root Causes of Homelessness:

We will say, oh, Jesus, they deserve where they are. They are lazy. They must get their act together and work just like the rest of us do.

Jesus will ask us:

Did you know that in North Carolina, 37% of renters cannot afford a two bedroom apartment? *Did you know that*, in North Carolina, one of four households with children suffers from one or more housing problems? *Did you know that* in North Carolina, people need to earn \$10.43 per hour which is 202% of federal minimum wage or work 81 hours a week to afford 2 bedroom apartment? *Did you know* that in North Carolina, 40% of low-income renting households are working families and retired people on fixed income in the state's urban areas? *Did you know* that about 34,000 of the 114,000 migrant and seasonal farm workers employed each year in North Carolina are estimated to have no permanent home? *Did you know* that in North Carolina, domestic violence/sexual assault and unemployment were the two leading causes of homelessness? *Did you know that* one third of the homeless are mentally ill people and they are on the street because this society and churches don't care for them enough? *Did you know* that there are not enough jobs for those with low education, lack of job skills or experience? *Did you know* that apartment owners keep renovating their buildings to raise rent *and* the poor cannot get back in due to the raised rent? *Did you know* that many welfare mothers couldn't respond to job offer immediately because they could not find affordable day care or night care or week-end care for her children?

Did you know that in the U.S. the gap between the rich and poor is too wide to cross? 1% of the total households in the U.S. own 39% of the total wealth and the next 19% own 46% of the wealth? “Laziness” has nothing to do with these issues. ***Are you still blaming*** the poor for their poverty and homelessness?

5. What Jesus will say about this homelessness in North Carolina?

Jesus would demand us to bring Good News, job and housing to those homeless, sight for them to see some hope, release and freedom to those who are in captivity of poverty, homelessness and illness."

As Jesus told a rich lawyer once, Jesus might tell you to "**sell what we have, give them to the homeless and follow me.**" Then you might respond by saying, "Oh, no, Jesus, are you out of your mind? We cannot do that because how hard we worked and gave our whole life to save our wealth.

As Jesus said to the crowd at the final judgment in Matthew 25, "When you welcome the homeless you welcome me. Therefore, **welcome the homeless into your home if you love me.**" Your response might be: Oh, Jesus, we cannot do that either because we are scared to death to bring any strangers into home."

At last, Jesus might demand, "then you open one or several rooms in your church and offer the poor and homeless a place to live because the church has many so many rooms.

Can you still say NO to Jesus or YES, yes, Jesus, we will open up several rooms because it is easier than selling all we have or receiving them into our private homes. If you do, it will become a GOOD NEWS to the poor and to the rich as well

I present 77 ways that churches can help. Manual is available. Some of them are emergency intervention. Others are long term prevention programs. Any inner city, rural church and suburban church can do some of the 77 alone or together. If any church says you cannot do any one of the 77, you may go to see a psychiatrist.

If Jesus were here this morning, he might suggest that we learn from the following programs:

A member of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Pasadena, CA. donated a house to her church to be used as a transitional house for homeless pregnant women

St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Richmond, VA., donated their parsonage to be used as an ecumenical transitional house for women and children and arranged for Reverend Paula Parker, to operate the mission.

The New Creation Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, a 50-member tiny church, worshiped at another church building, saved up and bought land for Mary's House, a transitional house, for homeless addicted women and children.

The First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, is buying an old hotel building to renovate into a permanent home for homeless women and children.

Your church, the First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, opened two rooms: one for substance abusing mothers to have their group work and another room for day care for their children. You also opened your brand new chapel to house the First Korean Presbyterian Church twice.

Many members of this church are also involved actively with Habitat for Humanity, Urban Ministry, Pathways, Mary's House and many more. It is wonderful that you all are involved.

But I still urge churches to move one step beyond, toward permanent solutions by adding permanent housing if we really want to end homelessness in this country.

Churches can rent or purchase a house or trailers and turn them into a permanent housing for the homeless. Churches can utilize their parking lots to park trailers for the poor and homeless.

If every church offers a house we can end homelessness. When I say these things to church members, they say that they fear helping the homeless. They fear vandalism, of being involved in more work, and of theft. This leads the church to lock up the building and let God's people sleep outside. Jesus will say "*I loved you so much that I died for you. What is such a big deal about losing something and a little extra work for me?*" When I decided to love them as God's children, fear was gone and I was given a sight to see the image of God in every one of the smelly homeless. Unconditional LOVE is the best tool to overcome the fear.

When are we going to open up one room?

We might tell Jesus that *we will think and discuss this...we might do it someday*. At the close of the reading in Luke 4:18, Jesus said, "**today**"

this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. When Zaccaheus decided to give half of his wealth for the poor, Jesus said, “**today**” salvation has come to this house. **The time** when God's purposes and promises are fulfilled has arrived. It is **today**. I say, the good timing to do something for the needy is when you have heard the need. Now is the right time. Therefore, for you, it should be “**today.**” Throughout the Gospel of Luke, “**today**” is never allowed to become “**yesterday**” or uncertain “**tomorrow**” or a vague “**someday**”. **Jesus** would tell us that people are dying right NOW. Do something **TODAY**.

My conclusion is that God never wants to owe anyone. As Proverbs 19:17 says, “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and will be repaid in full.” May God bless you. All God’s people say, Amen.

Note: This was 3000+ membership church. Soon after this worship service they decided to be part of a Hospitality Network by opening up several rooms for the homeless. The church also decided to use a mansion house standing across from the church as a day center for homeless women and children who stayed at the church shelter. Praise the Lord!

3. **Sermon at Gateway Pres. Church - September 19, 1999**
Scripture Text: Deuteronomy. 15:7-11; Luke 10:25-37
Sermon title: "Whose neighbor am I?"

INTRODUCTION

It is a privilege for me to be with you this morning. Greetings from Women's Ministries Program, Hunger Program, Health Ministries and Urban Ministries Program of General Assembly. Thank you for your generous contribution that has made many good programs possible throughout the nation. For those of you who do not know yet, let me report that the General Assembly adopted “Ending homelessness for women and children” as our denominational campaign. Women's Ministries Program moved this campaign into action. I had never dreamed that I will be sent out to the whole nation to motivate Presbyterians to do something to end homelessness in the U.S. I am

very grateful to be called for this mission. I have traveled half of the United States in the past year and a half.

God transformed all my past trauma as a refugee, through war, exile, separation, loss of loved ones into a strong motivation to serve the Lord by serving the homeless for the most of my 30 years of immigrant life in the U.S. As a product of U.S. Christian Mission in Korea, and as one of millions who were saved in Korean war by the sacrifice of U.S and UN soldiers, and as one of many immigrants who are blessed here, it was my turn to do something for the most vulnerable people in the U.S. I am going to preach from the two texts we have just read. My theme this morning is “Whose neighbor am I?” I would like to make four points.

Point One: Let us reflect on our scripture texts.

The Scripture text from Luke 10 is well known. We have heard many sermons delivered from this text. You will hear one more this morning. A rich young lawyer was testing Jesus by asking, "What must I do to inherit eternal life"? Instead of giving him direct answers, Jesus turned his questions back to the lawyer asking, what does the law says? This intelligent Jew, who had faith in God and knowledge of the Law, answered, "Love your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus responded, *right on, do it, and you will live.* The lawyer's answer was very correct because the whole Bible can be summarized in two sentences – Love God and Love our neighbor. But the lawyer wasn't going to be satisfied with his own answer. Perhaps it was too simple. He was going to test Jesus further. His next question was "Who is my neighbor?" The lawyer's test was to see where Jesus was drawing a line of neighborliness. In those days, the Jewish people thought of themselves as chosen and sacred. This excluded everyone else, especially Gentiles, mixed race, women, ***the poor, sick and homeless*** as unclean and ungodly sinners. Jews had drawn a very clear line of neighborliness, and their neighbor was only Jews. Associating with unclean people was violating their tradition. **If** Jesus labeled those unclean sinners as neighbors, then the lawyer was going to accuse Jesus of betraying Jewish tradition. Instead of giving ready-made answer, Jesus turned the lawyer's question back to him again to let him answer his own question by telling him the following simple story.

In Jesus' story, Priest and Levi, religious leaders, were passing by a wounded half-dead man on the Jericho Pass. They were in double bind at the moment because law says to care for the needy and the same law also says they should not touch the unclean. If they do, they cannot lead worship service because they themselves would become unclean. Therefore, they just passed by and didn't do anything about the wounded man. *Their focus was on themselves.*

In this story, Jesus presents a Samaritan instead of a good Jew. Samaria was located between the Judea and Galilee. To go between these two regions, people had to go through Samaria. In those days, the relationship between Jews and Samaritans was so bad that Jews did not walk through Samaria. Instead they went around a long way. They wouldn't even sit together to dine. The Jews avoided Samaritans at all cost. Jesus chose the Samaritan to help the lawyer to define true neighborliness.

First point: This text contains several points: Firstly, The good neighbor was not the wounded man but the Samaritan who did something for the man who suffered violence and injustice. The neighbor was the Samaritan who was compassionate toward the wounded. Compassion means to suffer with those who suffer. What the Samaritan man did was a justice to the wounded man. Somebody had to do justice to this man who was a victim of injustice. **Secondly**, Jesus' definition of neighborliness meant freedom from barriers. Good neighbors cross gender, social, religious, economic, cultural and political barriers. The Samaritan crossed all these barriers. **Thirdly**, **"Love our God and love our neighbor"** is a summary of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments is a summary of the entire Bible. Love God and love our neighbor is a summary of the whole Bible. Loving our neighbor is not an option but a Biblical commandment. Loving our neighbor is not a spiritual statement but a concrete action statement. Loving our neighbor by our actions is our response to Jesus who laid down his life for us.

According to Jesus in our text today, being a good neighbor to the suffering people is our way to eternal life. Isn't this contrary to our belief "Only having faith in Jesus Christ is the way to salvation?" We need to straighten out our theology here. Jesus said, **do it, help the wounded, and you will live.** Being a lawyer to the Law of God, this

young man had all faith in God. But Jesus' point was that faith must be followed by action. Without action, faith is dead as firmly described in the book of James. Dead faith cannot save us. Dead faith cannot make us a good neighbor either. John Wesley said, good works is not pre condition for salvation but mandatory to those who are saved. Therefore, for Jesus being a neighbor to wounded person was not an option but deadly serious matter that had to do with our salvation. The lawyer's question was directed to other people out there by asking **who is my neighbor** but Jesus' question was directed to lawyer himself by asking **whose neighbor are you?** Therefore, the lawyer ended up revising his answer, **"I am** the neighbor to the wounded man."

Point Two: How can we apply Jesus' definition of neighborliness to our contemporary broken situations?

In our culture, our neighborliness is broken between genders: God created men and women in God's own image and blessed them equally. However, in the U.S. a woman is beaten every 18 seconds and raped every 6 minutes. 25% of American women are raped in their lifetimes. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homicide among women. Half of homeless women are running from domestic violence. 50% of homeless women in America have been raped. 80% of women engaged in prostitution come from families of domestic violence. In the United States 4-6 million incidents of domestic violence or rape are reported each year. How can those abusive men become good neighbors to the abused women?

Our neighborliness is broken between the rich and the poor: While the United States is the most affluent country in the whole world, owning 59% of the world wealth and singing theology of blessing, nearly 40 million people in the U.S. live in poverty and 3 million people are homeless each year. We have created a society with too big a gap between the rich and poor. Women and children are the fastest growing segment of homeless population. Homelessness has become the most serious social issue. 40% of the homeless population are the working poor. How can the rich become good neighbors to the poor?

Our neighborliness is broken between different races: More and more racial ethnic people are filling up urban and rural neighborhoods. The first reaction to this change is white Supremacist's hate crime toward racial minorities. The second reaction is White's

flight to suburbs leaving inner city in the hands of the poor and let many urban churches decline and die. The third reaction is staying but isolate and insulate themselves from neighborhood claiming that "we are not neighborhood church," also saying that the poor racial ethnic people are not helpful to our church." Churches walk away further and further from Jesus. How can the Whites be good neighbors to the racial minorities? How can the Christian church become good neighbor to the poor neighborhoods?

Our neighborliness is broken between the homed and homeless people. Most neighborhoods along with city governments vigorously oppose homeless shelters coming into their neighborhoods. Many city governments create ordinances that homeless cannot sit on the streets, sleep in the park or even in their own car at night. Police pick them up and throw them in the jail. How can homed people and city governments be good neighbors to the homeless?

Our neighborliness is broken between parents and children: In the U.S. every year, 5 million youth run away from their homes. 2.3 million of them are arrested every year. Many are victims of sexual, physical and emotional abuse. Youth who experienced physical or sexual abuse reported higher level of gang involvement, violent behavior, dropping out of school, depression, suicide ideation, pregnancy, physical and sexual abuse, youth substance abuse, selling drugs, or felony charges. How can these abusive/neglectful parents become good neighbors to their children?

Point Three: I have seen many good neighbors

During my speaking tour I have seen many Presbyterian Churches and others be good neighbors to the homeless by opening up rooms, and welcoming them. Many of you are good neighbors to homeless friends by wearing the purple shirts that carry a message to "End Homelessness."

The Old First Presbyterian Church in San Francisco became a good neighbor by opening up one room and developing a Welcome Center for the homeless who have no place to sit during the day. Northminster Pres, First Pres, and Woodland Park Pres in Seattle are good neighbors to the homeless by opening up rooms to provide emergency shelter. Clifton Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, a tiny-50 member-church is a good neighbor to the homeless by opening the

whole sanctuary for most vulnerable, disabled and aged homeless men to sleep **every night**. The First Presbyterian Church, a giant inner city church in Atlanta is good neighbor to the homeless by building an outreach center and women's shelter on its parking lot. Several hundreds of these churches became good neighbors to the homeless by giving space in their churches.

As conclusion, I would like to say that becoming a good neighbor for the victimized, broken and injured people is possible only when we recognize all human beings are God's children. We are called to live together and to love one another. We are called to recognize that all we have belongs to God. We don't own the church, it is the house of God.

Jesus is asking us whose neighbor are we? The answer which Jesus puts in our mouth is that "We are the neighbors to the wounded and suffering in our society and world." May God bless you. Amen.

4. **Speech at Dorcas/DorCanaan Mission - November 13, 1999**

Scripture text: Exodus. 3.7-10; Matthew. 19: 16-23

Theme: Exodus/Liberation

Introduction

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in this history making event happening in the Orange County. The National Presbyterian Church adopted two overtures to end homelessness for women and children in this country. The Presbyterian Church sent me out to the whole nation to motivate Presbyterian churches and others to act to end homelessness I would like to extend my congratulations to Dorcas Homeless Mission and two Canaan Presbyterian Churches for having courage out of your busy life to start a meal program for the most marginalized neighbors in this area. May God bless you as you share your love, time, talent and financial resources with your needy neighbors. May God bless both Canaan Presbyterian Churches for opening a room and your hearts for this program. Congratulations to those of you who will benefit from this program. You have joined the Dorcass Mission and Canaan churches as your partners and companions in your difficult homeless life journey. May I ask how many of you are Christians? Quite a few are Christians. Thank you.

On behalf of the two churches and the Dorcas Homeless Mission, I can say that Christian faith won't be imposed on you. You have absolute freedom to accept or deny the Christian faith. You are absolutely free to keep your own religion. Another thing I want to make clear is that this program is initiated by Christian women and Christian churches, and is based on Christian love. This love is willing to welcome and embrace you unconditionally. You are absolutely free to experience the love of Christian God here. If you don't like their songs and prayers, you can stand or sit in the background.

I am presenting the two best liberation stories in the Bible. I want to make five points: My first point is that the Book of Exodus, which is the second book in the Old Testament in the Bible, brings liberation to the poor and oppressed. The word, "exodus" means "leaving, coming out of, being released, or liberated." The Hebrews in Egypt were forced to do harsh labor, were excluded from all privileges, were used, abused and exploited, discriminated against, enslaved, alienated, homeless and even murdered. They didn't own anything and had no power. Only thing they could do was to groan and moan. Their outcry reached God in Heaven. The Book of Exodus is the story of God who saw, knew, heard the cry of the suffering Israel people and came down to the earth to end their pain and lead them out of Egyptian slavery.

For the Israelites, Exodus meant liberation from the Egyptian bondage and slavery. Exodus was an end to Egyptian slavery but it was also a beginning of their journey toward Canaan, the land God promised to give Israel.

Canaan was their home where the Israelites could live for a long time with their children without slavery, abuse, and homelessness. The suffering Israelites corresponds to the poor and homeless of our day. Some of you might identify with the oppressed Israel and need to experience Exodus and healing.

My second liberation story is in the Book of Matthew. It is the story of ending spiritual homelessness for the wealthy. I define homelessness in four ways: physical, emotional, social and spiritual. One day, a rich young lawyer visited Jesus asking "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He wanted to live forever. Christians too believe our soul never dies and live forever. The young man here is presented as a model citizen; decent, rich, law-abiding, charitable, and religious, reading the Bible and praying every day. But it appears that he wasn't

sure of his salvation. He was asking how he could get eternal life. At first, Jesus gave him a traditional answer to keep the Commandment of loving your God and your-neighbor. The young man said "I kept all these and what do I still lack?" For this young man and many of us today, loving our neighbor means being good to your next door neighbor, or doing good to your close friends of the same color who do good to you, or giving money to some charity at best. Jesus told him that "if you wanted to be perfect, "sell all that you have, give it to the poor and follow me. Here the word "perfect," " teleios" in Greek, does not mean sinless or without defect but it means undivided devotion and true discipleship which means "following Jesus."

According to Jesus, following him means exodus from greed; freeing ourselves from the greed to earn and save more and more material wealth. For Jesus, following him means loving others sacrificially. Jesus was not blaming him for being rich but was telling him what to do with his wealth and what it takes to be his follower. In order to accept Jesus and become his follower, this rich young lawyer needed to experience exodus from his material greed.

My third point is asking what these stories speak to us in our reality today. These two stories tell us that all of us, the rich and poor, both need an exodus experience to live mutually beneficial life in our own reality.

What does the reality where we are living in today look like? The first reality is that the U.S. is the most affluent country in the whole world. For many of us, it is a wonderful place to live with lots of opportunities to get education, work and success. The second reality is that the wealth that this country owns doesn't trickle down to everyone. 20% of U.S households own 85% of the total wealth, which seemed to play a role of creating poverty and homelessness among many people. Some of us belong to that 85% poor or 20% rich. In your city, Los Angeles, there are 50,000-80,000 homeless. But there are only about 10,000 shelter beds in the entire system. In Orange County, there are estimated 13,000 homeless. About 30% of the homeless in LA are women and children. 7/28/98 LA Times reported a 228% jump from 1995 to 1997 in the number of nights women requested emergency housing. In Los Angeles - 41%, in Riverside-San Bernardino area-39%, and in San Diego - 41% of renters cannot afford a 2 bedroom apartment at fair market rate. In California, people must earn \$14.37

an hour which is 279% of federal minimum wage or must work 112 hours a week to afford a two bedroom apartment. The third reality is that there are many good people like Dorcas Homeless mission and Canaan Presbyterian Churches who are trying to do something to bring exodus to those homeless who suffer.

We all come from different families, traditions, cultures, walks of life and different pains and troubles. For some of us, exodus would mean freeing from economic poverty. For some, exodus means healing from all forms of diseases. For some, exodus means uniting with separated families. For others, it could mean finding jobs. For others, it could mean freedom from illiteracy. Still for others, it could mean leaving behind many gods such as materialism, consumerism, power, superiority, pleasure, house, jobs, children, sports and many more. Anything that dominates our hearts and souls, and we give undivided devotion and commitment becomes our god. May God bless those of you who have something to share with others.

Martin Luther said this very well; the wealth I own is not for me but for the poor; the knowledge I own is not for me, but for the ignorant; the wisdom I own is not for me, but for the foolish; the freedom I own is not for me, but for the oppressed. He was saying that blessings come to us with purpose of doing justice to others. Walter Brueggemann, Old Testament theologian, said that doing justice means “sorting out what belongs to whom and return it to them.” May God bless those who are here to serve. More endorphins are produced when we serve others and feel good about ourselves. Therefore, serving others serve ourselves. May God bless those who receive love and service today for you shall be servers someday.

My fourth point is about the wilderness we are walking in. The Israelites walked 40 years in the wilderness to reach the land of Canaan, their Promised Land. This journey from bondage to well-being and from Egypt to the new Promised Land was a long and hard road. There was no home, no support system or friends. There were many fears, risks, dangers, frustrations, discouragement and failures. There was hunger, thirst and danger. There was cold and barrenness. They were homelessness.

The journey for many of you might be like this. We need to walk side by side together supporting one another until we arrive at the promised land God is preparing for all of us. Israel’s life in wilderness

was tough and hard but there was God present at all times leading Israelites day and night until they reached Canaan. While we walk through our journey in wilderness, God will be with us, encouraging us, and guiding us to the Promised Land. Therefore, we must trust our God.

My fifth, and last point is that we have wide open possibilities. The wilderness is rough and tough but it has wide open possibilities. In the wilderness, you will find many wide open spaces. You can build a one story or 10 story building. You can dream any size dreams and visions. For those of you who come from a difficult life journey, this program will be your support and helper in dreaming your future. When we walk together, we will find all kinds of possibilities. This program starts with a weekly meal program. Together you can create and expand many more activities, programs, services. Neighborhood agencies would be a wonderful support and partners. Let us take this journey together to create possibility for everyone involved so that everyone will experience EXODUS/liberation.

I would like to urge us to remember one thing above all else: no matter how frightening this world may become, no matter how frightening the circumstances of your individual life may be today or tomorrow, how hard and discouraging the work may become, do not be afraid for God is with you. God will go before you to guide you out of oppression to the Promised Land. God will go beside you as your best friend for your exodus to the Promised Land. God will go behind you to push you out of out your complacency and move toward the Promised Land. God will go beneath you to strengthen and support you for coming out of your homelessness and to the Promised Land. God will go above you to bless you, who are supporters and those who are the service recipients both with courage and hope for your exodus to Promised Land. Remember the promise of our God who will guide us to do exodus, out of all forms of slavery and into the Promised Land. Amen.

5. **Black History Month:**

Delivered at the First Presbyterian Church, Mt. Vernon, NY

2/27/2000

Scripture Text: Luke10:25-37-Good Samaritan story

Sermon Title: "If I don't stop to help this man"

INTRODUCTION

Good morning. I am so glad to be here and meet all of you in the church Pastor Rose is serving. I realize that I am in Mt. Vernon, New York, where 50% of the residents are African Americans. I am standing at the pulpit of a predominantly African American congregation. I am also standing in the midst of your celebration of the vision of the late Dr. Martin Luther King and Black History. Although some of us are not African Americans, we join in your pride for the Black history. I am also with you on this particular week-end when most of you are extremely upset, grieving, depressed, and angry for the “not-guilty verdict” on the police officers who killed an innocent young African American man with 41 bullets in front of his own porch in the Bronx. What can I preach to a congregation under such a circumstance? I wish I have good human language and preaching skill to comfort you but unfortunately I don’t have them. The only thing I have is my heart that knows pain, so I can cry with you and share rage with you because I have a life-long-broken-and-wounded heart in me.

I am glad that I am here in your midst at this particular time because I too come from a nation in which we experienced pain, loss, oppression, dictatorship, assassination, enslavement, poverty, exploitation, invasion, and war. But I am also standing here with guilty feeling as one of privileged people, not materially but one with lots of opportunities. Most of all, I am standing here this morning in the name of Jesus who knows your pain and my pain, and who is proud of us.

Let us reflect on the scripture text from Luke 10, a well-known story of the Good Samaritan. I chose this text because our respected Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. chose this text for his last sermon at Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee on April 3, 1968, the night before his assassination. So I thought the best way to join you in celebrating the Black History Month would be by remembering the vision of Dr. King and preaching from the same text. Although this will be the same theme that he preached on, it will not be the same sermon. I am going to make a few points.

Firstly, one day, a young lawyer came to Jesus with a question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus knew that this man, being an educated Jewish lawyer, had deep knowledge of Scripture, and

had an answer for his own question. Jesus threw the question back to him asking what he read in the Bible. The young lawyer gave an answer from Ten Commandments to love God and to love our neighbor. Jesus replied, yes, you are right. Do that and you will receive eternal life. The lawyer's question ended so easily by giving his own answer. He threw another question at Jesus by asking "who is my neighbor?" You think, he did not know who was his neighbor? He perhaps wanted to test what Jesus has to say.

In those days, their concept of neighborliness was different from ours. Only Jews can be friends and neighbors. Gentiles could not be in the category of their neighbor. So he wanted to test Jesus in defining neighborliness. Again Jesus threw this question back to him by telling him a story of Good Samaritan and guided the young man to give his own answer again.

According to Dr. King's description, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was winding and meandering. It was most conducive to ambushing. Dr. King started out in Jerusalem, which was about 1200 feet above sea level. And by the time he got down to Jericho, 15 or 20 minutes later, he was about 2200 feet below sea level. And that was very dangerous road. He added that in the day of Jesus, it was known as the "Bloody Pass." Dr. King went through this Pass by a car but in Jesus' day most people walked through it and were often beaten and robbed.

In our text, when a Levite and a priest saw the wounded man, they passed by on the other side. They didn't stop to help him. But a Samaritan, a man of another culture, stopped and helped him. It is possible that the priest and the Levite looked at that man and each one of them was asking a question focusing on themselves; "what would happen to **me** if I stop to help him?" I will be late to the meeting. I will violate the law if I touch the dead man before the ceremony I am going to perform. Dr. King's point was that we usually focus on ourselves asking what would happen to **ME** or **US** if **I** or **we** stop and help. But the Samaritan man turned this **I** question to **THOU** question. What will happen to the wounded man if I don't stop to help him?" The Samaritan's answer to himself, "the wounded man will die if I don't stop to help," caused him get down from his donkey to help and save the wounded man.

Secondly, let us bring Dr. King's point to our contemporary situation: I have visited half of the United States to motivate Presbyterians to do something to end homelessness. I have learned a couple of realities we are living in: The first reality is the fact that the United States *is* the most affluent country in the whole world owning 59% of the world wealth. Many of us have a place to live, jobs, families, wealth, and dreams and hopes. Therefore, we can sing the theology of blessing. The second very contrasting reality is that we have created too many "Bloody Jericho Passes" in our society today by allowing the ever growing and widening gap between the rich and poor to exist. 20% of the total households to own 85% of the total wealth. **Poverty** in the U.S. is the Bloody Jericho Pass which assaulted 40 million people half dead. **Homelessness** in the U.S. is a Bloody Jericho Pass which had beaten 3 million people half dead for having no place to live. **Women** and **children** are the worst victims of this Bloody Pass. Each year over 100,000 New Yorkers experience homelessness. Currently there are over 25,000 homeless persons sleeping each night in the municipal shelter system. Approximately 90% of homeless New Yorkers are Blacks or Latinos. Families with children now comprise three-quarters of the homeless shelter population in New York City, and are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. From 1980 to 1995, the number of homeless families in New York City increased over 500%. Over 60% of homeless families previously resided in one of the city's four poorest neighborhoods (South Bronx, Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant and East New York). More than 1.5 million New York households qualify for federal housing assistance, but only a quarter receive such assistance. In New York State, 44% of renters are unable to afford 2 bedroom apartments. In the past 12 years, the number of overcrowded households has risen 64%. Households below the poverty line now make up one quarter of all households in New York City.

The Prison system in the United States has become a Bloody Jericho Pass. The United States has more people incarcerated, in numbers and per capita, than any country in the world. In New York, it costs \$60,000 per prisoner per year, equivalent to Harvard education. It is known that the U.S. government spends more dollars on building prisons than on low income housing. African Americans constitute only 13% of the total population in the U.S. But they are half of the

whole prison population. More black youth go to prison than to college. The number of private-for-profit prisons has increased. This means that more people will be sent to prison with a longer term to increase the profit. This insane plan is worse than Bloody Jericho Pass.

Domestic Violence has become a “Bloody Jericho Pass for many women in this country. Women are beaten every 16 seconds and raped every 6 minutes. Over half of homeless mothers in New York City prisons have a history of domestic violence.

Leaving mentally ill people on the streets means we are placing them on the Bloody Jericho Pass to be beaten half dead. 30% of homeless New Yorkers have a history of severe mental illness. 35% of homeless New Yorkers have a substance abuse problem. Failure to provide adequate treatment and housing for people with substance abuse problems leaves our sisters and brothers on a Bloody Jericho Pass.

In our day, some of the Bloody Jericho Pass has been created by police. You have a good example: The front of someone’s porch was created as a Bloody Pass when police officers shot an innocent young man 41 times in front of his own porch.

What should the Christian Church do about the Bloody Pass? We must turn the question around as Jesus and Rev. King did. Instead of asking “who is my neighbor” we must ask whose neighbor are we. Instead of asking what will happen to ME if I stopped to help, we must ask “what will happen to those who are trapped on the Bloody Jericho Pass if I don’t stop to help them?”

We have no choice but to go to Bloody Jericho Pass to help them. It will include opening up our churches for the homeless; walking in protest against the Bloody Jericho Pass; organizing coalitions with other religious or interfaith groups to help policy makers and responsible public officers to review their actions and help them to develop just public policy; and to dig into the root cause why people are beaten to death on the Bloody Jericho Pass and make changes.

During my speaking tour, I have observed what the churches are doing. It has been heartwarming to see most Presbyterian churches are doing **something** to help the homeless. But most of what they are doing is charity – it will do little to end homelessness. Homelessness

is not a major concern for most conference planners although it is THE MOST pressing issue for human beings today.

I have seen the following 3 models of the church. *Country club model* of church that is very exclusive claiming ownership of the church, self-serving, spiritually focused, other worldly, locking up the church and keeping the poor away. *Send a check model* which is semi-country club model that is doing the same the country club model does but send charity checks to different programs. *Christ's model*-entirely opposite of country club model- very inclusive, open, sacrificially sharing, courageous, and are free from ownership. They open one room or many rooms, or the whole church and welcome the homeless.

When we focus on what will happen to me, we will never be able to do anything because we will find hundred different reasons why we cannot act and become fearful, paranoid and anxious to what is going to happen to us. But when we ask what will happen to them, we always come up with the same answer that "*they will die.*"

Your church, the First Presbyterian Church, Mt. Vernon, NY will go on my list as you open the whole top floor to welcome homeless women to Naomi House who are victims on the Bloody Jericho Pass. While I encourage you to pat your own backs and celebrate your courage to allow the Naomi House to exist under your roof, I would also challenge you to move beyond that toward permanent solution by more active involvement with the Naomi House and political action, so that you can create better and safe Jericho Pass. Perhaps you can smooth the Jericho Pass down so that there will be no more deep deadly valley there.

It takes Dr. King's vision to bring justice to those who suffer. I heard from another African American who operates a huge meal program in Savanna, GA that he doesn't get much help from African American churches because they feel that they too have come a long way and walked through the deadly valley and made it, and asking why the homeless can't make it on their own just like we did. Yes, it is wonderful that you made it. But let us admit that not everyone can make it. Often on the outside, they look fine. But they are not fine. Many are emotionally disturbed and some are physically ill with diabetes, TB, heart problem, blood pressure problems, respiratory problems, AIDS, which are not obvious to our eyes.

My concluding question, which is Dr. King's question, "What will happen to THEM if we don't stop and help? *They will die!* Let us go to Bloody Jericho Pass and rescue those who are dying there. May God bless you all. Amen.

6. Keynote for Baltimore Presbyterian Women's Fall Gathering— October 7, 2000

GREETINGS/INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much for inviting me to this special event. I appreciate Presbyterian women in the Presbytery of Baltimore for being concerned about homelessness.

General Assembly adopted two overtures to end homelessness for women and children as a denominational policy. Women's Ministries Program Area was called to move this policy into action. I had never dreamed that I could be the one commissioned to whole church to motivate the Presbyterians to do something to end homelessness. That is why I ended up here.

Today, as a retired Presbyterian clergy, I am standing here as an Associate for Presbyterian Hunger Program on the issue of homelessness. Hunger and homelessness are twin children of poverty. The two go together.

During my speaking tour, I have noticed that there are hunger and thirst among Presbyterians to renew their faith and commitment to God and participate in God's mission to end homelessness. I am going to make a few points.

Point One is about the reality of homelessness in the United States.

Not too many people recognize our disturbing reality of homeless situation in the United States.

The First reality is that although the United States has less than 6% of the world's *population, the U.S. is the most affluent country in the whole world, owning 59% of the world's wealth. We consume 42% of the world's aluminum, 33% of the world's copper, 44% of coal, 33% of petroleum (raw oil) and 63% of natural gases and consume around half of the world's food. The food we waste could feed half of the world. Many of us have a place to live, jobs, families, wealth and hopes. For many of us, the U.S. is a wonderful place to live.*

The second reality is that in the United States, 20% of households own 85% of the total wealth. It seems that the the first and third world exists in our own cities. This ever-widening gap has resulted in having nearly 40 million people suffer in poverty, 40% of whom are children. 3 million people experience homelessness every year. Families with children constitute 40% of the homeless population. Homelessness for women and children is growing and spreading like disease. 70--90% of homeless families are headed by women.

According to the U. S. Census Bureau, over 700,000 residents in your state, Maryland are without health insurance. 16% more children in the state of Maryland spent time in homeless shelters than they did the year before. According to the State Department of Human Resources, in Baltimore, 156,000 people, 25% of the total population, live in poverty, of whom 37% were children and 12% were elderly. In Baltimore County, over 37,000 people live in poverty. 2,900 people received shelter service and 5,400 were turned away. Many more invisible homeless people don't show up at shelters and don't receive any service. Some researchers estimate that 5 million youth in U.S. run away from their homes every year and 2.3 million of these are arrested each year.

Today, one theologian said that we swim in a sea of consumerism, which threatens to swallow our lives. In a time of buying *power*, we lose our sense of gratitude. As a result, consumerism erodes our humanity. We build bigger barns to keep our stuff secure, and we find ourselves increasingly unable to lead simple lives.

Walter Brueggeman would say, it is a world of cynical indifference that is geared to indulgence, aimed at satiation, and powered by greed. Too many of us live an uninterrupted life of well-being without respect to others, pay as little tax as possible, none for public welfare, join nothing, and make no commitments.

Point Two: Why are people homeless?

Quite often we blame the homeless, accusing them of being lazy and not wanting to work. Many of us who have been working with homeless people can say that homelessness is NOT so much a personal issue, but a systemic issue. Our nation seems to lack the political will and policy to end poverty and homelessness. The poor are caught between the lack of sufficient income for the poor to afford housing and also lack of affordable housing for low-income people; other systemic dilemma they are trapped in are lack of jobs for people with few job skills and education although they are eager to work; low minimum wage; lack of affordable child care; lack of affordable legal service; funding cuts for housing and social welfare programs; arbitrary welfare reform pushes people into low paying jobs, into deeper poverty and even into homelessness; domestic violence from which half of homeless women are fleeing; divorce; chronic mental illness and other serious medical problems and disabilities; substance addiction; de-institutionalization; illiteracy; personal crisis or disaster; layoff or injury on the job; no place to go when released from hospital or jail and many more. Most of these are related to our policy issues.

For 3 decades I have worked with homeless people. I haven't met any one who didn't want to work. Even the mentally ill wants to work. I was the one who couldn't find jobs for them. The minimum wage earners with \$5.15 an hour can never afford an apartment. In Baltimore, MD, people must earn \$11.88 an hour or must work 92 hours a week under current minimum wage to afford a 2 bedroom apartment. 33% of renters in Baltimore, MD, are unable to afford a 2 bedroom apartment at fair market rate. Almost 28,000 households in Baltimore await housing assistance from the HUD. Currently, the average wait is 8 years. Some research points out that the lack of understanding about the reality and root causes of homelessness become barriers for the church's participation in the mission of helping homeless population.

Therefore, it is very important for us to understand the reality and root causes of homelessness.

Point Three: Theological Ground for our action:

The whole Bible can be summarized in to two sentences: Loving our God and loving our neighbor. Loving our neighbor is not a spiritual statement but an action statement. It is not optional it is mandatory. This is our response to what Jesus has done for us. Half of the Bible gives us reasons why we should end poverty, hunger and homelessness.

In their seminary days, Rev. Jim Wallis (Executive Director for Sojourner's Community in Washington D.C.) and his classmates searched through the Bible and discovered that in the New Testament, one out of every sixteen verses is about the poor; in the Gospels, one out of every ten verses; in Luke's Gospel one of every seven, and in the book of James one of every five is about the poor. One seminarian took the old Bible and a pair of scissors and cut out every single reference to the poor. When the seminarian finished, that old Bible wouldn't hold together; it fell apart. It was a Bible full of holes. When we don't respond to the poor, we cut the poor out of the Bible.

God created everyone in God's own image and blessed them equally to have a home on earth. We have Exodus God who couldn't sit still in heaven hearing the cry of the homeless Israel people, and came down to end their homelessness in Egyptian bondage. Jesus himself ministered to the homeless, sick, sinners and outcasts. Jesus identified himself with the marginalized saying what we have done for the least of these we have done for him. Do you need to hear more of the biblical ground for our action to end homelessness?

Point Four: What can we do?

We have been doing a lot already. How many of you have been giving to Presbyterian Women's Birthday and Thank Offering? Please stand and remain standing. One Great Hour of Sharing? Least Coins? The Women's Gathering in Louisville last July? How many of you donate volunteer hours and service for the poor and homeless? How many of your churches open up one room and offer emergency shelter or transitional shelter for homeless people? How many of your churches are involved in rotating shelter programs of interfaith

hospitality network? How many of your churches are involved in developing permanent housing? How many of you are involved in public policy advocacy to alleviate hunger and homelessness? How many of you are employed by social service organizations? How many of you are speakers for the issue of hunger and homelessness? How many of you are Hunger Action Enablers? Any other way are you involved in helping the poor and homeless? Wow, quite a few people are involved! Remain standing and let us give pat on each other's back saying "good for you. Praise the Lord." If you all gave enough patting, please be seated.

95% of the Presbyterians are doing something to help the poor. Presbyterian Hunger Program, Presbyterian Health Ministries, Urban Ministry Program and some others are working toward ending poverty, hunger and homelessness. Some give grants too. Today, congregational involvement with the homeless range from as simple as providing bag lunches, or hot showers, to providing eviction prevention, substance abuse counseling, overnight shelter, to transitional or permanent housing. According to 1999 HUD report, religious nonprofit organizations operate 34% of the homeless assistance programs and more than half of all food programs for the homeless. In Washington D.C., research indicates that Christian churches are collectively spending approximately \$19 million on homeless outreach. In Harford County, MD, 76% of the congregations are providing assistance to homeless persons.

During my speaking tour in 25 States, I have seen 127 programs. It was quite inspiring experience to see that most of these programs were either started at churches or by Christians.

Point Five: However, I dare say, "Let us move one step beyond."

While we celebrate for all these things we have been doing and pat our own backs, we must move beyond from where we are. I would point out a few reasons why.

Firstly, demand for service is getting greater: 58% of the Maryland suburbs can no longer meet the demand of the communities that they serve. This is also a reality everywhere in the nation.

Secondly, Homeless people cannot live by bread alone. In the area of District of Columbia and Maryland/Virginia suburban

congregations, the six-city survey witness that 60% of faith-based providers are sponsoring feeding programs. Nationally it is also true because feeding and clothing are rather easy thing to do.

Thirdly, Gap Analysis did not identify feeding and clothing as a high priority. Perhaps because there are plenty of congregations support feeding and clothing. But the Gap Analysis identified housing, life skill program, mental health counseling, child care, youth services, after care, etc. as high priority. The Gap Analysis indicates that faith communities should be engaged in more substantial projects to help end homelessness.

Fourthly, we look at our blessings from abundance principle, not from scarcity principle. From scarcity principle, we never have enough. We might say that we cannot do anymore because we don't have any more. But abundance principle will guide us to see that we have plenty; material wealth, wealth of faith, wisdom, knowledge, expertise, time, energy, health motivation, and that all of our wealth belongs to God. God gave us all that we have and we are the stewards to use this plentitude in God's service.

In my workshop, we will talk about 77 mission ideas to end homelessness. Just briefly, I encourage churches to open one room and do some of the 77 projects. My 77 ideas cover emergency intervention, prevention and permanent solutions including public policy advocacy. To carry out these programs effectively, churches and social service agencies need to coordinate our effort and resources. To achieve this, we must move toward more permanent solutions. I don't mean to say that we must stop what we have been doing. I mean that we need to have new vision to end homelessness, not just offering **emergency** care. While I am urging churches to move one big step forward toward ending homelessness I am also urging us to speak up in two ways: One way is to speak the truth by wearing homeless shirts. Our dream is to have one million people wear the shirts so that one billion people will read the message to end homelessness. When the whole church wears them, and the whole nation talks about the issue, we will be motivated to do something to end homelessness. Hunger program shipped us a box hoping you will help buy and wear them. Profit will go to the homeless women's project. The other way to speak up is urging our government to do its part and do better in dealing with

homeless situation in America by allocating more funds for more affordable low income housing.

As federal funding decreases and the results of welfare reform are experienced, cities all over America are turning toward faith-based communities to fill the gap. Is our government so poor that it turns to the church while it has so much surplus? Churches do what we can do because we are the people of God but we won't take over government's responsibility, nor can churches alone end homelessness. Therefore, we must urge our government to spend more of our tax money and develop many more comprehensive rehabilitation program including housing, education, job training, more jobs, child care, after care, health care, etc. to pull people out of poverty and welfare instead of keeping them on welfare or in prison.

In my workshop, we will talk about some model programs I visited, and collaborative models of church, government and social service agencies. I hope to see you there.

May God bless you as you struggle to move one step further to end homelessness.

7. Delivered at the morning chapel of Union Seminary,

Richmond, VA - October 10, 2000 (Presbyterian Seminary)

Scripture Text: Luke 4:18-19

Sermon title; Jesus' vision

Introduction

Good morning everyone. This week I am in Richmond to support Rev. Paula Parker who is running a shelter for homeless women and children. Thank you very much for inviting me to this chapel time. I am glad to be at one of our Presbyterian seminaries. I always enjoy speaking to seminary students because I love to motivate them to go into a ministry with the homeless population. How many of you were, in the past or currently, are doing something to help homeless people? I am sure some of you are involved with that.

General Assembly of Presbyterian Church passed 2 overtures to end homelessness in 1997 and 1998 as a denominational policy. I had never dreamed that I could be commissioned to the whole nation to motivate Presbyterians to do something to end homelessness in this

country. For the past two years, I have spoken to a couple of hundred church groups in 25 states on behalf of Women's Ministries Program of General Assembly. Last July I retired but now I am still traveling around to speak as an *Associate for homeless issues* for the Hunger Program of General Assembly on the issue of homelessness. The Hunger Program published my book of 300 pages, and developed a video on "ending homelessness," as educational resources for the Presbyterian Church. It also took over the t-shirts project that I developed to help the church to carry the message to end homelessness.

I chose a well-known scripture text for this morning devotion. In limited time, let us think on three points together.

Firstly, let us reflect together on Jesus' vision. As we all know, Luke 4:18-19 is known as Jesus inauguration speech or his vision speech. When Jesus heard of John's arrest, he decided to go to Galilee. Galilee was not very attractive place to do ministry. The salary package wasn't going to be good, perhaps no pay, no benefits. At the time Galileans were suffering economically and politically under Roman occupation. Galilee streets were full of the poor, sick, and homeless. Slavery, uproars, suppression, persecution, mass murder, were common. Galileans were despised as mixed blood people by the Jerusalem Jews. Jesus named Galileans "the poor, blind, prisoners, captives and oppressed." Matthew calls them, "the people who sat in darkness and shadow of death." An important point is that Jesus chose Galilee as his first mission site.

On a Sabbath day in a synagogue, Jesus announced his vision by reading Isaiah 61, to people gathered. His vision was and still is to bring good news to the poor, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, release to captives and the year of the Lord's favor which meant Jubilee. In one word his vision was Jubilee vision. We can say that his jubilee vision, was to end poverty.

Rev. Gordon Cosby, founder of The Church of Savior summarizes it as follows: *"Jubilee, in its original Biblical meaning, focused on the outsider – the weak, the defenseless, and the outcast. It was a social ideal designed to prevent the creation of a permanent class of poor people and allow those outside to start again. The Jubilee Vision is made real when the outsider comes inside and is forever at home. Jubilee for the Hebrews was God's justice for the poor."* According to Walter Brueggeman, Old Testament scholar, jubilee justice is sorting out what belongs to whom and to return it to them.

Secondly, let us understand our reality where we must live out Jesus' vision

The first reality is that the United States has less than 6% of the world's population but is the most affluent country in the whole world, owning 59% of the world's wealth. The United States has 4 million millionaires, 170 billionaires and consumes nearly half of the world's resources. You and I have a place to live; jobs, families, plenty of possessions, education and hopes. For us, the U.S. is a wonderful place to live. We can sing the theology of blessing. The second reality is that in the United States, 20% of total households own 85% of the total wealth. The split between the first and third world exists on our own streets. Nearly 40 million people suffer in poverty, 40% of whom are children. 3,5 million people experience homelessness every year. 40% of homeless population are working people. More than half of the homeless people are women and children. We have an estimated 5 million youth run away from their homes every year and over two million of them are arrested each year. In Richmond, VA, where you are, people must earn \$ 11.73 an hour or must work 91 hours a week to afford a 2 bedroom apartment, under current minimum wage. In Richmond, 37% of renters cannot afford a 2 bedroom apartment at fair market rate.

In his book "Rich Christians in An Age of Hunger" Ronald Sider describes our reality as follows: *Possessions are the most common idol for rich Christians today. Affluence is the god of 20th century North Americans, and the adman is his prophet. Shower of luxuries almost suffocated our Christian compassion.*"

Another theologian says that "*We swim in a sea of consumerism, which threatens to swallow our life. Consumerism erodes our humanity.*"

Why are people poor or homeless? Quite often we blame the homeless for being lazy and not wanting to work. Homelessness is not so much a personal issue but rather a systemic one. Some of the root causes are as follows: the nation doesn't have the will to end poverty and homelessness; lack of sufficient income for the poor to afford living; lack of affordable housing for low-income people; lack of jobs for people with lack of job skill and education; minimum wage is not a livable wage; lack of affordable child care; cutting funding for

housing and social welfare programs; welfare reform pushes people to go into low paying jobs and into deeper poverty and even into homelessness; domestic violence from which half of homeless women are fleeing; substance addiction; divorce; illiteracy; mental illness; de-institutionalization; medical problems, personal crisis or disaster, injury on the job, and many more. While I was working with the homeless for 3 decades, I haven't met any homeless who didn't want to work. Even mentally disabled homeless wanted to work. I was the one who couldn't find job for them.

Thirdly, in such American social, cultural context, what can be the seminarian's vision for ministry? What can be the church's vision? What can be seminary faculty's vision in developing future church leaders? I talked to many pastors and seminarians. Consumerism seemed to have invaded the life of pastors and seminarians also. Most of them look for an established church with good size salary package with benefits. They don't want to serve homeless population. Most of our churches don't want to include the homeless in church growth plan because economically they are not valuable. Too many churches are interested in erecting new or expanding church buildings, which serves these days, as a sign of success and power.

While I was on this speaking tour, I have seen three models of the church and leaders. The first one is a country club model which is very exclusive, self-serving, self-righteous, insulated, discriminating, other worldly, mainly focusing on member's personal salvation and keeping the church building locked up to keep all unwanted, poor homeless away. Many nearly worship their church building. The second is "send a check model" which is a semi-country club model that repeats what the country club model does but send some charity checks. The third one is a Christ model. These churches are living out Jesus' vision announced in Luke 4: They are very open, inclusive, reaching out, welcoming, sharing and loving. They open one room, the whole floor, social hall, sanctuary, parsonage, and even parking lot, purchase a house, old hotel building and apartment building to bring homeless home. Some churches decided not to own church building but to serve the poor with all of their financial resources.

I have been attracted to the Jesus Jubilee vision since my teen-years. This vision of Jesus guided me to work with lepers in Korea and for the past 3 decades to work with homeless people in the United States.

I developed homeless women's church in Seattle without any pay at first - to empower women to restore their pride, self-worth and dignity by experiencing a positive, loving and forgiving God.

Is Jesus' Jubilee vision moving you at all? Would you like to begin to live out Jesus vision? There is a program, called daughters of Zelophehad, in Richmond. This a transitional housing for homeless women and children run by Rev. Paula Parker, a Presbyterian Clergywoman. This program always needs more space, human and financial resource. You are invited with your faith, love, talents and financial support. Rev. Parker will love to have you there. The poor and homeless are crying out for help. Jesus is crying out through them. Can we say "YES, here I am Lord, I will go?" May God bless you all as you struggle to teach, learn, and live out Jesus' vision. Amen.

8. **Spiritual Renewal of Lamoille Pres. Church, Lamoille, NV**

Oct. 21, 2000

Scripture Texts: Genesis. 1:26-28; I Corinthians 3:16-17

Sermon theme: Honor God and honor ourselves

INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much for inviting me to your spiritual renewal event. It is an honor and privilege to worship and praise God with you this evening. We will reflect together on our theme "Honor God, Honor Ourselves." Let us consider the following several points:

Point one: We are created in God's image.

Our Genesis text declares that God created men and women in God's own image, not in the image of dogs or pigs. This means that humans are to be honored, respected and enjoyed by the creator. This also means that we are very, very important and precious to God. God loves us so dearly, faithfully and profoundly that God could die for us. God's love became the root and the very source of our love for our own family, friends and the world. In our Genesis text, once humankind is spoken of as singular, "created him," and also plural, "*he created them.*" According to Professor Brueggemann, Old Testament scholar, "*on one hand, humankind is single entity. But on the other hand, humankind is a community, male and female. And none is full image of God alone. Only in community of humankind is God reflected.*" This means that we are

not alone. We are together as a community. Every one of us is part of the entire community. One member of the community aches, the rest of the community feels the pain. We enjoy each other and are also responsible to care for one another.

Point two: We are the temple of God's Spirit;

Our Corinthian text declares that we are created as the temple of God's Spirit.

This means that we are the dwelling place of God's Spirit. God did not create us as a trash bin but as a home of God's Spirit. If the White House, where our President and his family reside, is very important not only to the President but to all American people to be respected, cared for, and protected. Then how about the home where God resides? Isn't God's dwelling place more important and better than the White House? We must honor and thank God for creating us in the image of God and as the home of God's Spirit. Therefore, we must respect, love, and honor ourselves and one another. This is the way we respect, love and honor God. If we abuse self and others, this means we also abuse God.

Point three: We often damage and dishonor the image of God

and the Temple of God's Spirit. We are not allowed to trash or damage the White House in anyway. But we often trash and damage the home and the community of God's Spirit in the form of domestic violence. I was raised by wealthy parents. But whenever father came home, I was scared to death because he was beating up my mother. Once he broke her back. We call this **physical abuse**. My brothers and I hated my father most of our lives.

I know a woman in Seattle, whose husband never hit her. But he wouldn't allow her to have money, to drive, to buy anything, or to visit her friends. He yelled at her calling her all kinds of names, and threatened to kill her. She was living in constant fear. We call this emotional abuse.

I have met a Korean woman who married to GI and came to U.S. to live. He discriminated against her nationality, language and culture. He ridiculed her food and her past work. We call this social abuse.

In the U.S. a woman is beaten every 18 seconds, raped every 6 minutes, at the hands of her spouse, an intimate partner or stranger.

We have 4-6 million reported domestic violence incidents per year. 50% of homeless women are fleeing domestic violence. Research shows that domestic violence costs American businesses from \$6.4 to \$36 billion in lost productivity, diminishes public image, legal and insurance expenses, increased security and other related factors. Each year, an estimated 3.3 million children are exposed to violence by family members against their mothers or female caretakers. 90% of incarcerated men come from family of domestic violence. 70-80% women who are engaged in prostitution come from families of domestic violence. 96% of rape cases under age 12 are by family members or relatives. Girls are 4 times more likely to be abused than boys. Over 35% of battered women attempt suicide. The leading cause for women to visit emergency room and for homicide of women comes from domestic violence. In many states, domestic violence is treated as a crime.

I describe violence on women as follows: Violence is visible or invisible assault to the image of God in women; it is impairing women's body, soul and spirit; violence is treating women lifeless, least or lesser or lower than anything; it is making women landless (no home, no job, no resource to live); it is forcing women to be limited, lonely, lost and losers. Violence is an act that erases, eliminates, estranges, excludes and expels women from their homes; violence is an act of neglecting, negating and nullifying women's existence; it is making women naked, nameless and needless, nobody and nothing; It checks women out like canceled checks and cuts women off from all the chances. The experience of abuse is of being controlled, chained, chastised, cheated, choked, chopped, crucified, ceasing to exist. It is an everlasting captivity.

Victims of domestic violence will experience psychological and physical symptoms such as frequent sickness with cold, headache, backache, ulcer, heart problem, respiratory problems, inferiority feeling, loss of trust, isolation, loneliness, fear, anger, anxiety, depression and paranoia. They never can function as a whole person. Girls are more likely to become victims of domestic violence and boys are more likely to become abusers in their adult life. They can not hold jobs or successfully maintain marital life and show a tendency to turn to substances. Domestic violence damages women and children profoundly.

What spouse or parent would want to abuse their loved ones, if they know all about these devastating impacts of abuse on them?

As all humans are created in the image of God and into human community to look after one another and as the temple of God's Spirit to be honored, violence against women and children is a violence against God's home.

Alcohol abuse is the third leading cause of death in the nation. Alcohol abuse is a factor in nearly 40% of the violent crimes of murders, rapes, robberies and assault. Over a third of Presbyterians indicated that drinking alcoholic beverages has been a cause of domestic problems. Alcohol damages liver and brain and eventually takes lives. I once treated an ex-Boeing executive in the mental hospital who damaged himself by alcohol abuse. He lost his house, savings, small airplane he owned, position as an executive and his wife and himself.

Some of you might have dogs or other animals. Do you feed them drug and alcohol? I know you don't. Are we than less than dogs? Any form of abuse to ourselves and others, including despair and not living our full, God-given potential is violence to the image of God and the God's home. Therefore, it is not just a personal issue. It is community and social issue. It is the faith issue. It is the Church's issue. It is God's issue.

Some of you who have been abusers, you have been a captive of death as you were destroying God's home. Some of you who have been victims, you have equally been a captive of death as you have buried yourself in despair, sorrow, anger and hatred. Some of you who have been wasting your time, energy, God-given potential, you have been a captive of death also.

God is calling upon all of us tonight, abusers, victims and wasters to stand up before God with our confessions about our abuse of God's temple. God will give us courage to die to the violence we have been performing to ourselves and others. In this renewal service, let us commit to honor God and honor ourselves so that we may stop abuse and violence and that we may honor God and ourselves. Let all the abusers and victims rise together to new life and new hope. Finally, the community created in God's image will be restored and then we will truly honor God and honor ourselves and others. May God bless you

and empower you as you decide to honor God, honor yourself and honor others. Amen.

9. Keynote at New York Theological Seminary's 100th

Anniversary – Women in Ministry Conference – June 30, 2001

Theme Scripture Text: Ruth 1- 4 (story of Ruth & Naomi)

Conference Theme: Molding a Generation: Shaping a New Millennium

Introduction

It is a great honor for me to be here celebrating with you the 100th Anniversary of the New York Theological Seminary and to be part of the Women in Ministry Conference. Since there are many students here tonight, in order to encourage you I want to share some of my tough life journeys that I came through.

I usually introduce myself saying, from my chronic illness, I could have been dead at age five. From the pain and trauma in my family, I could have been damaged profoundly in my teen years. For the sins I committed, I could have been crucified in my twenties. For my rejection of God's call, I could have been thrown out of God's world in my thirties; yet for the grace of God poured out on me, I cannot write enough even using the "sky as a scroll and seawater as ink." God transformed all my diseases, bitter grief, profound despair, sins, disobedience and rage into a faithful motivation to serve the Lord by serving homeless, mentally ill and substance addicted people.

66 years ago, I was born and raised in patriarchal family, in a patriarchal church culture, and in a patriarchal society in Korea. I grew up watching the suffering of my mother who was severely abused by my wealthy, highly educated father, a leader of the village. As a fetus, my little cells, nerves, bones, brain and mind were formed and shaped in her tears and anguish. Therefore, I can say that I was conceived, born and raised as a feminist. 42 years ago, I graduated from a Presbyterian seminary in Korea with the highest honor in the class, but I wasn't allowed to be ordained because I was a woman. I said "heck with the discriminating church system," and made myself a social worker. I worked with lepers, TB patients, orphans, homeless elderly and widows in post Korean war era.

14 years ago, I was ordained in PC, USA and placed in the campus ministry at the University of Washington. God kept challenging me and I ended up developing and serving a congregation of homeless women in Seattle, WA for another 7 years. The past four years, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) put me on a speaking tour to motivate churches to do something to end homelessness for women and children in this country. My talk has been so tough that no one would want to hear except God. But an overwhelming number of groups have been inviting me to hear what they don't want to hear. You are the 272nd group in 27 States who invited me to hear what you don't want to hear about.

First of all, before I get into the tough stuff, let us celebrate the amazing grace God poured out on the New York Theological Seminary to carry out the ministry of Jesus Christ for the past 100 years. Let us celebrate for all the faculty members of the Seminary who helped shape and mold faith, theology, character, identity, and commitment for thousands of students for the past 100 years. Let us celebrate the Seminary's faithful inclusiveness of students from different cultural, racial, ethnic backgrounds into theological education. Let us celebrate all the past- women, present- women and future-women who were, are, and will be in ministry of Jesus Christ. We are here to pledge our solidarity to work together until everyone on earth comes home to God.

I was asked to deliver a keynote/sermon/reflection. I don't quite know how to do it appropriately. So my talk will be neither a complete sermon nor a complete keynote, nor complete reflection. As I get older, I realized that everything and anything I do is "incomplete." May I suggest us to keep in mind the key points of the panel discussion and keynote presentation and Bible study we heard. They spoke half of my keynote. Therefore, my speech might be preaching to the choir.

In order to attempt to shape a new millennium, we must begin by recognizing the cultural, political, economic and social and racial reality in which we are living and doing ministry, and out of and for which our vision for ministry in the new millennium must arise.

The first Reality is the fact that the United States is the wealthiest nation in the whole world owning 59% of the world wealth, and having 4 million millionaires and 170 billionaires. Nuclear, Military and High

tech. power are superior in the whole world. Many of us are blessed with education, jobs, families, place to live, pride and dignity. I am blessed by being allowed to put my roots down in this country. Many of us can sing a song of blessings.

In order to be able to hear the rest of my talk I would suggest you to hang on to what we have just celebrated and the wealth and the blessing this nation is granting to us so that you wouldn't fall out of your chair because my talk can be very disturbing to your ears. I keep hearing voices from my homeless sisters for me to speak from their perspectives.

We have elected a government that is very generous to the wealthy and stingy to the poor. We have an economic system that needs poor people to maintain the system that offers the rich more benefits. In this wealth craving culture, many of us are addicted to greed for material goods.

Theologian Ronald Sider describes in his book "Rich Christians in An Age of Hunger: *Possessions are the most common idol for rich Christians today. Affluence is the god of 20th century North Americans, and ad man is his prophet, and shower of luxuries has almost suffocated our Christian compassion.*"

Professor Morikwa writes that "we have created a society in which our ultimate goal is maximization of profit and power."

Another theologian described that "*We swim in a sea of consumerism, which threatens to swallow our life. In a time of buying power, we lose our sense of gratitude. As a result, consumerism erodes our humanity.*"

The Second Reality is poverty in the United States. 40 million people live in poverty and 3 million people experience homelessness per year. 1 million people are homeless on any given day. One out of every 4 homeless persons is a child. In the U.S. 13 million households have severe housing-related problems- and that doesn't count the roughly 1 million homeless individuals. In New York City, you have nearly 100,000 different people per year and 25,000 people on any given night experiencing homelessness. 78% of homeless shelter residents are families. Homeless families with children comprise the fastest growing segment of New York City's homeless shelter population showing a 25%.increase. This represents nearly one out of every 20 New York City resident. During a recent five-year period (1987-1992), nearly one of every 10 Black children and one of every 20

Latino children in New York City resided in a homeless shelter system. Approximately 90% of homeless New Yorkers are Black or Latino, although only half of New York City's population is Black or Latino. In New York State, 44% of renters are unable to afford 2 bedroom apartments at fair market rate. In the New York City, people must earn \$16.59 per hour or work 129 hours per week under your current minimum wage of \$5.15 to afford a 2 bedroom apartment.

In our own society, and in New York in particular, there are many women like Naomi who experience homelessness. In Moab, Naomi ended up losing her husband and two sons. What a heart-piercing, soul-crushing, bitter pain and rage she must have experienced! When I lost one son, the pain was so great that I wanted to end all together. I cannot imagine what the pain would be like when you lose two sons and a husband. Her feeling of being forsaken by God is well expressed in Ruth 1:20 saying, "call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty." Yes, my homeless sisters feel the same way that the Almighty had abandoned them. They are born in this country but lost their families, jobs, homes, hopes, dignity, pride and a will to live. They feel bitter just like Naomi did.

Poverty pushes children into violence. Every 4 hours a youth commits suicide. Every 2 hours, a child or youth is killed by a firearm. Every 9 seconds a child drops out of school. Every 10 seconds a child is reported abused or neglected. Every 17 seconds a child is arrested. Every 32 seconds a child sees his or her parents divorce. Every 3 minutes, a child is arrested for drugs. Every 5 minutes a child is arrested for a violent crime. *An estimated 5 million youth run away from their homes every year and over 2 million of them are arrested.* Many of them are victims of sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

Rev. Jim Wallis, advocate for the poor in Washington DC, describes that "the most painful and dangerous sign of the crisis today is what is happening to our children. They are our most at-risk population; the recipients of our worst values, drugs, sickness; our most armed and dangerous criminals; the chief victims and perpetrators of escalating violence; an object of our fears more than our hopes. When children talk about their favorite kinds of caskets instead of their bikes and plan their funerals more than their future

they are signs of our crisis." Many of these children are growing up in our inner cities.

Prof. Letty Russel describes the image of the city as a battered woman. Like a battered woman, the city suffers through cycles of violence, isolation, fear, rejection, powerlessness, blaming, guilt, and victims of violence.

The third Reality is a drug culture of our society. Hal Joseph Recinos, professor of theology, culture and Urban Ministry at Wesley Theological Seminary pointed out that nearly 20% of infants in America born in city hospitals are substance addicted. There is a massive waste of human life in the city caused by the high levels violence and drug-related problems. Drug-related crimes cause jails to fill each day with teenagers doing heavy time. Professor Recinos sees the violence and drugs in the city as, in part, byproducts of the structures of racism. Powerful leaders of white society have limited the structure of opportunity for people of color, forcing the people of the ghetto to find other ways to survive.

He points out the drug background as follows: In the 960s, the white's suburban flight left poor people of color in the city. The Vietnam War brought an increase of heroin traffic to inner cities; Reagan's support of the Contras in Central America contributed to the spread of crack in North America. Geopolitical realities have a way of directing drugs to urban streets and profits into white-collar hands. Drug trade is an international profit-motive business sponsored outside of the ghettos. Despite Bush's drug war, the role of military and police agencies is unlikely to dismantle the international drug trade. If just one cargo plane penetrates the interception net, it will succeed in bringing into this country a huge amount of cocaine. The risks are high but so are the profits. He points out that the church has failed to address the urban violence associated with the international drug trade. He added "African American men between the ages of 15 and 24 had a better chance of surviving combat in the Vietnam War."

Vincent Harding, author and historian visited West Germany and African American soldiers told him that they were reenlisting in the Army so that they could keep from coming home to their own neighborhood, where they were afraid of being killed.

The Fourth Reality is Root Causes of poverty and homelessness: President Bush said at the University of Notre Dame's Commencement that "average Americans can help end poverty by meeting the emotional and spiritual needs of poor people. Corporations, charities and private citizens will play a bigger role in fighting poverty, with more focus on spiritual issues."

We often blame the poor for being lazy and not willing to work. Advocates who work with homeless people would point out root causes: Lack of government's will and policy to end poverty; lack of low income housing by gentrification; government's reduction of Section 8 housing assistance, federal disinvestment in housing, and the government's cut back of housing funds; lack of sufficient income for the poor to afford rent; lack of jobs for people with few job skills and poor education; low minimum wage; lack of affordable child care; domestic violence, divorce; illiteracy; mental illness; de-institutionalization; medical problems, personal crisis or disaster, injury on the job, and many more. Treating substance abuse is regarded as a legal issue with punishment rather than treating it as a medical problem. Therefore, we as individuals, the church, and as a nation share the ownership and responsibility for the root causes.

The Fifth Reality is Growing Diversity and racism in our society. The 2000 census reflects that the United States has become an increasingly diverse nation where the minority population is growing fast. According to the census, 69% of 281 million total population is White and 31% are racial minorities. Hispanics have nearly tied with African-Americans as the largest minority, each making up 12.5% and 12.9% of the population. In New York, the general population comprises 40% White and 60% racial minorities which became the majority. In this country there are many legal or illegal immigrants just as Ruth, the Moabite, immigrated to Bethlehem. In general, Jews perceived themselves as God-elected and the rest of the world as no-nation or no-people and treated them as unclean sinners. In the post-exilic period, Ezra and Nehemiah tried to persuade the Jews to abandon the foreign wives they had taken. Foreign women were traditionally viewed with suspicion, as a potential source of temptation to sin. (I King 11;1-8; Prov. 5:1-20). In such a time, immigrating to such a nation was very risky.

In our culture, we have people who were brought here by force and enslaved, sold, used, exploited, discriminated against and plagued by drugs for several generations. The Indians were here first but were thrown off of their land and have ended up drowning in alcohol poison. We hear frightening stories of hate crimes by white supremacists against other minority races, especially against blacks. We also read and hear about mail-order brides and wives of GIs who are brought here, abused, exploited and even murdered. We also hear that immigrants are used in sweatshops or massage parlors or for cheap labor. Many of them quietly suffer severe abuse and are murdered in silence due to their illegal status.

Eleanor Scott Meyers points out that the city is a home to a multi-ethnic population frequently caught in the horizontal violence of cross-ethnic and interracial strife, poor-on-poor crime. She sees this horizontal violence as part of a result of increased vertical violence in the form of increasingly institutionalized racism.

Our challenging question is where are the churches in such socio-economic and political, racial and cultural contexts? The majority of churches seem to be in denial or are ignorant of the reality and root causes. If they are aware of them, they don't seem to know what to do about it or want to avoid all together.

Do you think that contemporary Christians can serve God and mammon simultaneously? Too many church leaders are after fat salary package with benefits and don't want to get their hands dirty with the homeless. Many church members seem to find no difference between the church and secular values. Many rather stay home, watching sports game on TV on Sunday morning. Many congregations flee to the suburbs leaving inner city churches to struggle on their own. Many congregations want to maintain homogenous group and reject ethnically different and poor people. Many of these churches are slowly dying.

I have observed 3 models of the church in this country. The first is a **country club** model that is exclusive, self-serving, protective of building and carpet, focusing on spirituality, personal salvation and blessings. The church is kept locked to keep the homeless away. The second is send a check model that follows what the country club model does but sends checks to charity programs. The third is Christ's model that is entirely opposite from country club model. They are open,

inclusive, welcoming by opening up rooms, a social hall, class rooms or the whole sanctuary to accept the homeless. They don't worry about church getting dirty or losing a few items.

In such socio-economic and political, racial, cultural and religious contexts what can be our vision for the ministry in the new millennium? We have to seek the answer from our Lord, Jesus.

I present JESUS' HOSPITALITY model as our vision for the new millennium. The concept of hospitality first comes from the creation story. The world was created by God as a hospice for man and woman. God was the host, and humans were God's guests. Hospitality is best exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ. This host Jesus was born, raised and lived a homeless life. He did not have his own home to welcome his guests. He knew what it meant to be poor and homeless. He was identified himself with the poor and powerless. He used himself as a home and food for his guests. In John 6, Jesus said, if you don't eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you. His love, grace, compassion, forgiveness, and healing were his home and food for his guests. His death on the cross is the best hospitality he offered for the whole humanity: The earth as Hospice and we as guests of God. We are required to host one another.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said that when we host the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the stranger, the prisoner, and homeless, we host him. I have seen many churches that are hostile to these people. I have also seen many churches open the whole church and offer hospitality to our needy ones. Mt. Vernon Pres. Church and Fifth Ave. Pres. Church in NY are good examples.

For Ruth, a stranger, an outsider, there was hospitality in Bethlehem. When Naomi hosted Ruth, the Moabite, with all of her love, support, and advocacy, and when Boaz hosted Ruth by bringing the outsider inside, into the marriage with him, redemption and salvation came. This salvation was not just for Naomi and Boaz and their nation, Israel, but the whole world, the whole humanity because Ruth became an ancestress of Jesus Christ. This salvation was bound-together-salvation, which came not through a few rich and powerful, but through Ruth, most unwanted, unwelcome alien, foreign woman, poor and powerless immigrant, a new comer a late comer, an outsider. This is the kind of salvation Jesus Christ would want to bring, which is not only personal but also corporate one in which one group can

contribute to achieving salvation for another group. To achieve this, Jesus said “sell what we have, give it to the poor and follow me.”

Rev. Gordon Cosby, the founder of the Church of Savior would call this “jubilee,” which is possible when the outsider comes inside and is forever at home.

Prof. Walter Brueggemann would call this “justice” which is possible only when we sort out what belongs to whom and return it to them. Last night Andria Hall called this “surrendering” and “letting go” of all we have. “Surrendering and emptying what we own” is possible only when we realize that what we own belongs to God. As Dr. Eleanor encouraged yesterday, the rich, the poor, men, women, old and young, early and late comers, whites, blacks, yellow, brown skins, homeless, mentally ill, substance addicted people to come together, ecumenically and interfaith level, and also with other community organizations we can work together to bring bound-together salvation. Isn’t the “inclusiveness,” a vision of this seminary? Isn’t the inclusiveness a vision of Jesus’ salvation and his church?

Hospitality is more than inviting someone to dinner. It involves accepting, giving, sharing, sacrificing, loving, advocating, and even dying for the guests. It means living like Christ and dying like Christ. Can such a hospitality be our vision for ministry in the new millennium? Jesus said I will go with you and you can do it for me. As Andria Hall puts it, we are ambassadors of Christ to carry this vision. Can we all answer “Yes, Lord, I will go, send me.” May God bless you in digesting this vision. Amen.

10. Sermon at Everett First Pres. Church (Everett, WA), and Snohomish Presbyterian Church (Snohomish, WA), First Pres. Church Women’s Retreat, (Bend, Oregon), Overlake Park Pres. Church (Seattle, WA), Lord Jesus Pres. Church (Richmond, VA), Astoria Pres. Church (New York), Rotham Korean Pres. Church (New York), Fonutleroy UCC (Seattle, WA), First Pres. Church (Lynn Haven, FL), Pasadena Pres. Church (St. Petersburg, FL), Mission Community Pres. Church (Spokane, WA), New Haven, Korean Pres. Church (New Haven, CT), Cheshire United Methodist Church (Cheshire, CT), Maplewood Pres. Church (Edmonds, WA) and Heritage Pres. Church, Alexandria.

Scripture texts:

Gen. 18: 1-12; Matt. 25:35-46;

Theme: Hospitality: Host and Guest

Hospitality is such a popular theme in the Bible that I have been preaching on this theme using different texts throughout the year – perhaps 16 times.

Thank you very much for inviting me to deliver the message. It is so good to see you all. I bring words of appreciation from the Women’s Ministries Program Area and Hunger Program for your generous contribution toward One Great Hour of Sharing and Birthday Offerings which helped many homeless programs in the nation. You are the 430th group I have spoken to, in 31 states so far.

During my speaking tour in the past 6 years, 114 different host families have offered me their warmest hospitality. I carry them in my heart. Jesus has been hosting me since age 13 with his unconditional love. 33 years ago, this country welcomed me to put my roots down. I walked Seattle streets for 20 years welcoming homeless people to Jesus. Therefore, the concept of “hospitality” takes a very special place in my heart.

My sermon theme from the scripture texts is “Hospitality: Host and Guest” I bring 2 very familiar stories of hospitality from the texts we have read.

The Hebrew Bible places a tremendous emphasis on hospitality. Inviting others into their homes was a foundation of their society, because they had once been strangers/sojourners/resident aliens/immigrants/refugees, and they knew what it felt like to be strangers in a strange land.

In the Hebrew culture, the Greek word for host and guest (zenos) and hospitality (philozenia) and also the Latin word for hospitality (bustus), and guest (hostis) all include meaning of “loving strangers or enemies.” This means that true hospitality must include a total stranger, even an enemy. Unlike how we do, inviting loved ones or friends, people back then hosted total strangers. Because their homes were in the desert, an oasis, or stopping place was a mutual gift that desert people could offer each other. Therefore, hospitality was as a central theme throughout the Scripture.

Let us find some common points in our texts:

1) **The first common point** is that in both texts, warm hospitality was offered to the needy strangers: In our text of Genesis, Abraham offered warm hospitality to total strangers who appeared at his door out of nowhere who looked needy for place to rest. Abraham invited them to come in to rest for the night. In our text of Matthew 25, the judge separates the sheep from goats. His criterion of judgment is not the confession of faith in Christ, grace, justification, or the forgiveness of sins. His criterion of judgment is hospitality people offered or not offered to the needy; the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned and homeless, who were always needy strangers in that society. Both groups were shocked!

Many texts in the gospel witness that Jesus offered warm hospitality to the poor, sick, crippled, slaves, women, widows, orphans, homeless, tax collectors and sinners who were all strangers in his days.

2) **The second common point** was that the host and guest position was reversible. In our Genesis text, Abraham, started out as a host but he became a guest when he received good news of having a child. In our Matthew text, hosts who cared for the hungry, sick, and homeless, became guests into the eternal home on the final judgment day.

In Rev. 3:20 Jesus places himself in guest and host position saying that *I stand at the door. I am knocking on your door* [as a needy guest]. *If you hear my voice, open the door, I will come in and eat with you* [as your guest] and you will eat with me [as my guest]. Mark 2:15-17 witnesses that Jesus ate dinner at the sinner's house as a guest but he invited other sinners to join as a host.

3) **Our third common point** is that all the hosts offered their best for their Guests: In our Genesis text, Abraham used his best resource, young calf, flour and oil to extend an extraordinary welcome to the strangers with a magnificent feast and offered himself as their servant. In our Matthew text, the food, clothes, water, time, energy, and money they shared with the poor strangers were their precious resources that they would need for their own survival. In those days no one except a few had anything extra to share with anybody else. But they did.

We read and hear a lot about Jesus offering of his best – his own life to his guests; there will be nothing better or greater than one's own

life. The two hosts shared the best material resources they had. But Jesus gave his own life for his guests.

When we serve the homeless church, we cook best meal every week for the homeless as if we offer best hospitality to Jesus himself. We gave brand new lingerie for homeless women to uplift their self-esteem.

4) The fourth common point is that the hospitality offered came back as blessings for the hosts. In our Genesis texts, the hospitality Abraham offered to strangers without knowing their identity came back as a blessing for Abraham and Sarah to have a child in their old age. Their guests turned out to be angels/God. Having an heir was their life-long-wish. In our Matthew text, the hospitality offered for the poor, sick, and homeless came back to the hosts themselves as a blessing of eternal life.

Hospitality is more than inviting someone to the dinner.

The theology of hospitality must lead us to re-examine our personal and corporate life. We are living in the wealthiest country in the world. Many of us enjoy the most abundant, the most convenient and the most comfortable life on earth and under the sun.

However, in such an affluent nation, 40 million people suffer from poverty, 3.5 million people experience homelessness every year, and nearly a million every night. Nationally, new faces of the homeless are families with children and the working poor. 55% of them have no medical insurance. 9 million Americans are on the unemployment rolls. The ever widening gap between the rich and poor is another cause of poverty. Today, the average worker makes 7.39 per hour, but the average CEO makes \$1,566.00 per hour – 212 times more. The National Coalition for the Homeless calculated the cost of war in Iraq, \$78.5 billion, could build one million units of low income housing and could end homelessness in the U.S. Rev. Edgar of National Church Council of Christ states that 2.7% of the Pentagons' budget would assure health care for all of America's children. Martin Luther King Jr. said that *“every bomb that fell on our enemy reduced the education, housing, and health care of vulnerable Americans at home.”*

Homelessness for women and children often means assault, robbery, rape and even murder. Homelessness severely impacts the health and well-being of all, especially for women and children.

Compared with housed poor children, homeless children experience worse health; more developmental delays; more anxiety, depression and behavioral problems; and lower educational achievement. Many homeless women would identify their homelessness as "death." 46% of the homeless women one time reported having chronic health conditions, such as arthritis, high blood pressure, depression, diabetes or cancer. Their life span is shorter than housed people (approximately 48).

The hospitality our Lord Jesus offered us is a sacrificial one.

This means we cannot be comfortable with where we are. We are called to live out the command of Jesus' hospitality in our reality. Therefore, hospitality must lead us to mission. Dr. John Buchanan, former moderator of Presbyterian Church (USA) said "Mission is why we are here," and "the Church exists for the world." Emil Brunner said "the church exists by mission as fire exists by burning" John Buchanan further says: We are NOT called simply to exist, survive or even to be successful. But we ARE called, as the church, to be faithful to Jesus Christ and to serve and love the world as he did, and to give our lives away to the world as he gave his life away.

We have been Jesus' guest for most of our lives, receiving grace and salvation.

Now is the time that we must host Jesus by hosting needy people in our midst with warm hospitality. Let me end my sermon with my Litany of Hospitality and be reminded of how our Lord's hospitality is and how our hospitality should be.

Litany of the Lord's Hospitality:

The Lord's hospitality knows neither enemy, nor outsider.

The Lord's hospitality knows neither division nor boundary.

The Lord's hospitality knows neither discrimination, nor racism.

The Lord's hospitality knows neither gender, nor sexual differences.

The Lord's hospitality knows neither rich, nor poor.

The Lord's hospitality knows neither poverty, nor hunger.

The Lord's hospitality only knows love unconditional.

The Lord's hospitality only knows hope that uplifts the despairing.

The Lord's hospitality only knows grace that forgives unforgivable.

The Lord's hospitality only knows compassion that feels other's pain.

The Lord's hospitality only knows shalom that ends all wars.
The Lord's hospitality only knows justice for all the suffering.
The Lord's hospitality only knows binding wounds and brokenness.
The Lord's hospitality only knows honor that praises the lowliest.
Note: After this service, the Everett First Presbyterian Church opened up their social hall to offer hospitality of dinner once a week to the homeless guests.

11. Sermon at Knox Pres. Church, Baltimore, MD. May 4, 2003

Scripture Texts: Rev. 21:1-4; 22-27:

Sermon title: "New Jerusalem"

INTRODUCTION

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus. Thank you for inviting me to worship God with you this morning. *Thanks to your pastor Iris for her warm hospitality* in welcoming me into her home.

I am familiar with seeing visions. On Easter Morning in 1988, God appeared in my dream and spoke to me out of a huge fire. The spirit guided me into a little one room church and told me to plant a cross inside the door and it would grow through the roof. As a result of this vision I developed the Church of Mary Magdalene, a homeless women's church in Seattle. After serving there for 7 years I was called by Women's Ministries Program for two years and then by our Hunger Program. The past 3 years I have traveled around the whole nation to motivate churches to end homelessness. You are the 401st church group I have spoken to. All in all, what I have been doing has been planting the cross in the church as the vision guided me. I can relate to John's vision in the Book of Revelation.

I would like us to reflect upon the text from Revelation with the theme

"The New Jerusalem."

Firstly, let us understand the background: The Book of Revelation, is known as the *Apocalypse of John*. As we all know, John is the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ. Biblical apocalypse does not refer to the end of the world. Rather *Apocalypse* simply means "revelation" from God. *Apocalypse* is a form of biblical writing characterized by highly symbolic imagery, about a core belief that God will break into human history in dramatic, life-changing ways. The Apocalypse was written in a time of

great social disturbance in the last quarter of the First Century Christian era.

Domitian was the Roman Emperor then. He exploited Jews with heavy taxation. Domitian demanded that his subjects address him as Lord and God. Choosing Christ could cost you your life then. Some abandoned the faith to save their lives. Cities were unsafe places. No airliners rained from the skies, but terror reined on the streets and in human hearts. This was the old Jerusalem. Jesus lamented over Jerusalem by saying, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it." Jerusalem killed Jesus. In such a time, John declares this vision of the New Jerusalem to comfort Christians who were marginalized and persecuted

Secondly, let us see what was John's vision. He had many but the major one we are going to talk about is written in Rev. 21:2, John announced, "*I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.*" We usually think of the holy city as other worldly, the city we will see after our death. But John saw it coming down from heaven to where he was.

This New Jerusalem city is different from the old one that killed Jesus and so many innocent others. John heard a loud voice saying, *See the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more.* Again, he was NOT saying these things at our funeral service. He said that it will be done while we live on earth. God's dwelling is not to be found above in heaven. God's home is coming to the earth where we live. God dwells with us on earth where we are. God is no longer far off and removed but very much part of our world. We will live with this God as God's people in God's own home.

This God's home was different from our homes because God is using different material to build his home on earth. The material for the foundation of the God's home is love. The material for poles was life and hope. The material for the roof was compassion, grace and justice. The material for the wall paneling was security and peace. The material for the doors was welcome and warm hospitality. The paint for the whole house inside and outside was rainbow colors that knew no discrimination. The House of God had so many rooms that nobody

could possibly count. Everyone would have their own room. No one would be homeless. That house of God was filled with so much food, medicine and lots of fresh water that nobody would go hungry, thirsty or sick. In this home, the host was God himself and we are with God at all times.

In v. 22, John *saw no temple in the city. Its temple is the Lord God and the Lamb.* The whole city is the New Jerusalem; is a sanctuary. There is no church like ours which locks the doors to keep the dirty, smelling homeless away. There are no churches whatsoever in this New Jerusalem because God is everywhere. The whole New Jerusalem city was the temple. In this New Jerusalem city of God, the face-to-face relationship between God and humanity was crucial. The New Jerusalem city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it because the glory of God shines on the whole earth, and its lamp is the Lamb, Jesus Christ. This New Jerusalem does not need electricity because it is bright at all times. There is no night, no darkness there.

Its gates will never be shut by day or by night. There is no wall in Jerusalem. So there is no need for gates. New Jerusalem streets are wide open and safe. A heavenly light takes away all the darkness. People freely come and go unharmed and are only welcomed. John saw the open city streets with no gates and the lights were always on. Love is the rule. The peace is everlasting.

This New Jerusalem knows no color, race, or discrimination. This New Jerusalem is an inclusive city where everyone is welcome.

The New Jerusalem city may be from heaven, but humans can be the means of channeling God's grace into it. God works through humans. It is not all left to some eschatological miracle. Human agents may become partners in building the New Jerusalem here and now. John's vision is of a communal society centering around humanity's relationship with God and with one another. It is now offered to all of us.

Who are excluded from the New Jerusalem? Those who ignored God by worshiping material things as a god are excluded. Those who placed their own self-interest above God's justice are barred from new city; those who have compromised and collaborated with the old Jerusalem, the cowards who have refused to stand up for justice are barred from entering the New Jerusalem.

John, the beloved disciple, to whom Jesus entrusted his mother, knew very well what kind of city Jesus was dreaming of. As Matthew witnesses when Jesus appeared, “Galilee of the Gentiles – the people sat in darkness and in the shadow of death had seen the light.”

John’s image of the New Jerusalem was the city that Jesus intended to build, an inclusive community, the heavenly city by feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, visiting the imprisoned and welcoming homeless and by bringing good news to those who suffer in poverty and hunger, proclaiming release to the captives in physical and emotional prison, helping recover sight to those who could not see any hope and future, & letting all the politically, economically, culturally oppressed to go free, Bringing the year of the Lord, which meant jubilee.

Thirdly, how is your city today? Dividing walls, fences, locked gates and doors are all over the city even around churches. One side of the city is an affluent first world and the other side is 3rd world of poverty, some of which are slums. Many people including churches escaped to suburbs leaving the city in the hands of the poor. The suburbs become more prosperous and cities become poorer. There is huge, ever-widening gap between these two cities. The rich own expensive luxurious homes and the poor sleep at shelters with many others or on the streets. Gentrification keeps reducing low income homes in the city. I saw many poor homes that are empty and boarded up in this area where you are worshipping right now. The city will not repair them for lack of funds.

Over 700,000 Maryland residents are without health insurance. In Baltimore, 25% of the total population live in poverty, of whom 37% were children and 12% are elderly. In Baltimore, 39,000 households were cited as having worse needs. Nearly 18,000 people received shelter service and 20,000 were turned away for not enough beds. In Maryland, people must earn \$16.82 an hour to afford a 2 bedroom apartment at fair market rate. Maryland is one of the 10 least affordable states in the nation. Baltimore ranked the top of 10 Metropolitan areas with the largest increase of housing wages by reaching 22.68% increase.

Congress has just approved \$78.5 billion for the initial cost of war in Iraq. This money could build one million units of low income housing. The United States shot 400 cruise missiles into Iraq which

values \$ 1 million each. If we spend the cost of war for housing, we can end homelessness in U.S. Martin Luther King Jr. said that every bomb that fell on our enemy reduced the education, housing, and health care of vulnerable Americans at home. Unless changes are made in the existing federal law, 900,000 children nationally will join the ranks of the uninsured. Illiteracy has a direct relationship to juvenile delinquency. The kids will end up in the corrections budget, not Medicaid. Homeless children often cannot attend school and fall far behind. Homeless people experience an increased rate of victimization or violence. Compared with housed poor children, homeless children experience worse health; more developmental delays; more anxiety, depression and behavioral problems; and lower educational achievement. 46% of the homeless reported having chronic health conditions, such as arthritis, high blood pressure, diabetes or cancer. Their life span is shorter than normal people. African Americans consist of only 13% of the total population but occupy half of the prison system. It is reported that more African American Youth go to prison than to college after they graduate from high school. Did I draw an accurate picture of our cities, the old Jerusalem?

Fourthly, is the New Jerusalem an utopian city that doesn't exist except in a dream world? John says IT IS NOT SO. How then will the New Jerusalem be possible?

In the United States, after a season of decline, city-center churches are once again growing. Rev. Nile Harper, the author of "Urban Churches," observed that in the past decade, a movement of spiritual revitalization and community redevelopment is taking place in African-American congregations, in mainline churches, Roman Catholic parishes, and in evangelical fellowships. Neighborhoods are being rebuilt, new housing is being constructed; business are being created; and new schools and community-based health care centers are being established. Communities are coming to new life and taking charge of their future. Leadership has come from among a generation of clergy and laity who believe that change is possible, that the time is now, and that the church must lead. In city centers where congregations are vital and growing, church members and pastors are engaging in community-building in the neighborhoods. When the urban churches do all these, with God they are building the New Jerusalem. *Prophet Jeremiah said in.*

29: 7 *welfare of the city is our welfare.* This means until the urban city is well, nobody is well. We all have to be well together.

During my speaking tour, I have seen many churches that are building the New Jerusalem. Your church must go first on the list. When you are feeding the hungry, you began to build New Jerusalem. When you offer after school program for poor and homeless children in your church neighborhood, you are building a New Jerusalem. When you install a shower and restroom for the homeless, you are building a New Jerusalem. When First Pres. Church in Atlanta, built transitional home for women and children on their parking lot, it built a New Jerusalem. When First Pres. Church in Phoenix, Arizona opened an After School Program, it built a New Jerusalem. Rev. Nile Harper calls these churches “vital signs of the city.” Vital signs are indicators of life in the body.

The Old Jerusalem killed people but the New Jerusalem brings life to people as vital signs keep life going. John’s vision of New Jerusalem coming down from heaven is not a utopian story but can be a reality in our own city. May God bless you as you struggle to build your New Jerusalem. Amen.

12. Mother’s Day Delivered at Heritage Pres. Church, Alexandria, VA.

May 11, 2003

Scripture Text: I King 3:16-27; Isaiah. 49:15

Sermon title: Compassion

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for inviting me to worship God with you on this Mother’s Day. I bring greetings and words of appreciation from Women’s Ministries Program and the Hunger Program for your generous contribution through One Great Hour of Sharing, Birthday and Thank Offerings. Your contributions made grants possible for many programs in the nation as well as internationally.

For many people, Mother’s Day is a very happy day to celebrate but for others, it is a grieving day. When I was serving homeless women’s church, I could not call it “Mother’s Day” because it was very painful day for most homeless women. They were carrying anger

toward their own mothers and tons of guilt and grief for giving up their own children in their homeless life. So we called it Women's Day.

After being invited to preach here today, I prayed what text I will preach on. The Holy Spirit guided me to our two texts I had never preached on before.

Firstly, let us reflect on our texts.

First text is from I King 3:16-27: To make the long story short, two prostitutes who lived in the same house came to King Solomon. Let's call one woman A and the other woman B. Woman A complained that the woman B smothered her own baby by sleeping on it. When the woman A tried to nurse her child, she discovered a dead child on her bosom which was not her child. The woman A claimed that the woman B exchanged the dead child for her living one. Woman A and B each claimed that the alive child was hers. There was no eyewitness for the crime. It was one woman's words against the other.

But the King never interrogates the two women. He does not visit the site of the crime, nor does he send investigators out. Instead, the King threatens the life of an innocent child, expecting some response from these women. Thus the King calls for a sword and orders that the living infant be cut in two and each half be given to these women. Woman A begged the King not to cut the baby. She cried out, *"that's my boy, I love him so much. Please don't kill him. Let the woman B have him. It is better than killing my baby."* v. 26 clearly reports that woman A wanted to save the baby by giving him up because "compassion for her son burned within her." But the other woman said to the King, *"It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it."*

The King got what he was looking for. His base for judgment was mother's compassion. The king saw the compassion in mother A. Then the king responded, "Give the woman A the living baby. She is his mother."

Secondly, the next text the Spirit gave me is from Is. 49: 15

God says, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no COMPASSION for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, I will not forget you."

God relates woman's womb and mother's compassion and quotes woman's compassion to convey God's own compassion.

What is compassion? According to theologian Phyllis Tribble, there is a Hebrew word *Rahamim*. In its singular form *Rehem* means “womb” or “uterus.” In its plural form, *Rahamim*, means “compassion, mercy, and love. God and Tribble both make connection between compassion and womb. The Hebrew Scriptures uses metaphor “womb” to present God as the one who opens and closes the womb in Gen. 20: 1-18; forms body in the womb in Jer. 1:15; conceives in the womb; receives out of the womb; and carries from the womb to gray hairs in Isaiah 46: 3-4. Therefore, to say “God is compassionate” is to say metaphorically God is “like a womb”.

God gives birth to us as a mother does. As a mother loves and feels for the children of her womb, so does God. Therefore, to be compassionate is to feel as God feels and act as God acts in a life-giving and loving way. Men might ask where we are with all these. Yes, men also feel compassion. For example, when Joseph sees his brother Benjamin for the first time from whom he was separated many years, he was overwhelmed. Joseph retreats to another room to cry, “because his *Rahamim* for his brother burnt within him” (Gen. 43:30). The word “*Passion*” comes from the Latin word that means “to feel,” and the prefix “*com*” means “with.” Thus compassion means “to feel with.” Therefore, compassion is to feel the suffering of somebody else and being moved by that suffering to do something.

For Jesus, compassion was the central quality of God. He felt this compassion toward the crowd and this compassion led him to feed hungry multitude and to heal the sick and welcome the homeless.

On this Mother’s Day, I wish to end my sermon right here by celebrating women as God’s instrument for giving birth to all humanity, and for being created in the image of God’s compassion. Feel pride in it.

Thirdly, we need to move beyond praising ourselves because compassion is not given to us just to feel good. God gave us that precious gift to feel for other’s pain and do something about it. And therefore, I have to guide us to walk through our painful reality where our compassion is needed.

There are prostitutes in our text: In biblical time and today, we have little compassion toward prostitutes. Prostitutes then and now are people who haven’t got much except their bodies to sell for survival.

They live in tremendous shame, guilt and low self-esteem. Statistics report that women who come from a past history of emotional, sexual and physical abuse easily fall into prostitution. At least 90% of street prostitutes were abused as children; 90% are addicted to drugs or alcohol. One former prostitute said, "Leaving prostitution was the toughest thing I have ever done in my life. It was so ingrained in me that I believed there wasn't anything better." While many women are successful as political leaders, astronauts, lawyers, professors, scientist, and business women, and military personnel, too many women are not making it. Prostitutes in our text may represent all poor, marginalized, despised and excluded homeless women in our society who have nothing but their own bodies to sell for survival.

There is a dead child in our text. His death was not his fault. He was simply a victim. We have so many dead or dying children in our society. 40% of 40 million people in the U.S. suffering under poverty are children. One of every 6 children is poor. 40% of our homeless population are children. According to Jim Wallis, advocate for the poor in Washington DC, "the most painful and dangerous sign of the crisis today is what is happening to our children; they are our most at-risk population; the recipients of our worst values, drugs, sickness. The dead child in our text didn't deserve death. He represents all the child victims and lonely children who grow up without fathers.

We have a woman in the text who appeared to be cold blooded and didn't care about the welfare of the living baby. Could she have lost her mind upon killing her own child? She seemed to wish to revenge her own fault on the other living child. We hear news that parents kill their children by mistake or intentionally. Recent news reported that parents forced 4 years old child to drink fatal amount of water as punishment and killed her. Many people just don't seem to care about our harsh reality. Many people say the poor are responsible for their poverty and homelessness, and they don't care to look at the root causes saying, it is government job to solve problem of poverty, and not my job. I am too busy, I don't have time, I have my own problems, I don't care. I have seen many churches in a country club model. They are very exclusive, self-serving, spiritually focused, other worldly and don't seem to care about people who sleep outside. This mother who smothered her own child in our text may represents all the careless, cold blooded grownups in our society who kidnap, rape and kill

children.

In our text, there is a mother who saved her precious baby by giving him up. By becoming weak, giving in, and obedient to the unjust demand to give up her child, she was given him back. It was the image of Jesus. In Philippians 2: 7-9, Paul said Jesus emptied himself of the glory, rank, privilege, and rights as the Son of God, and became obedient to the death on the cross, and God exalted his name above every name on earth. It is the same compassion of Jesus the mother share. Emptying is quite the opposite of the culture today. Our contemporary culture teaches us to accumulate things, cling to them as if the purpose of life is to fill up with profits, power, wealth, pride, honor and possessions. So our success is measured by achievement and possessions.” Theologian Ronald Sider describes in his book “Rich Christians in An Age of Hunger,” “Possessions are the most common idol for rich Christians today. Affluence is the god of 20th century North Americans, and shower of luxuries almost suffocated our Christian compassion.” But Jesus showed us the way of gaining by losing, filling by emptying, and living by dying. The mother of the living child in our text represents all the compassionate mothers on earth who emptied and sacrificed their lives for their children.

There is a child in our text who is privileged with life. He couldn't do a thing about it when his life was about to be taken because he was a helpless, fragile young infant. But the life was given back to him as a gift by King Solomon for his mother's compassion. This living child can represent all privileged people like you and me. We are privileged to live in this affluent country. We are blessed abundantly with too many free gifts. But we live in a delusion that we own everything.

Martin Luther said: The wealth I own is not for me, but for the poor. The knowledge I own is not for me, but for the ignorant. The freedom I own is not for me, but for the oppressed. I have seen many churches that live out compassion by opening up the whole sanctuary or rooms to welcome the homeless to sleep there. The churches participate with their resources and talents in job training, day care, after school program and developing low income housing for underprivileged people. I heard your church is helping families in transition. Praise God for you.

There is a wise and righteous judge in our text: At some point we too must stand before the judge just like two women did in our text.

When we stand before the judge, as Matt. 25 declares, those who fed the hungry, cared for the sick, and welcomed the homeless will be blessed into the eternal life, because our compassionate action to the least of these means what we did was as though we did it for Christ himself. The criteria of judgment of King Solomon and the final judgment will be based on our compassion.

On this Mother's Day, I want us to affirm that we women are blessed as the home for all humanity because everyone came through women, our mothers. Let us celebrate this day for our great mothers for being mothers, mothers to be, and for being receivers of the precious gift of womb of compassion (regardless the marital status).

Let us also make this day an exceptional day of compassion that leads us to examine the root causes of all these injustices and determine to do advocacy for

all the excluded, especially women and children. Jesus says in Luke 6:36, "Be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate." God invites all men and women to be partners to build a community of compassion for all humanity.

Let us all answer, Yes, here I am, Lord. May God bless you.

13. World Communion Sunday (Oct 5, 2003)

Delivered at Cheshire United Methodist Church, New Haven, CT.

Scripture texts

Gen. 18: 1-12 (Heb. 13:2)

Matt. 25:35-46

I Cor. 11: 23-26 (Matt: 26:17-29; Mark 14: 12-25; Luke 22: 7-23;

John 13: 1-17) Sermon theme: Hospitality

Introduction

I was in New York before coming here. The New York weather took my voice away. Would you please follow me by reading my sermon script, please?

It is an honor to worship God and share communion with you today. Thank you very much for inviting me back to deliver the message on this World Communion Sunday and your Annual Mission Sunday.

The Origin of the World Communion Sunday comes from a Pittsburgh pastor, Hugh Thompson Kerr. In 1933, (he proposed) who

had a unique idea, thinking “What if churches all around the world celebrated Holy Communion on the same Sunday?” He contacted leaders of various denominations worldwide. His idea was met with such warm enthusiasm that celebrating the sacrament on the first Sunday of October became an annual affair. It unites Christians throughout the world.

I am standing before you this morning as a product of the U.S. Methodist Mission in Korea that introduced me to Jesus. Jesus has been hosting me since age 13. 33 years ago, this country welcomed me to put my roots down here. I walked Seattle streets for 20 years inviting homeless people to heavenly banquets. During my speaking tour for the past 6 years, 96 different host families including Kathy Smits, your church member, have been offering me the warmest hospitality. Theology of “hospitality” takes a very special place in my heart.

When we come to the Lord’s Table we cannot help but think of Jesus’ hospitality. I bring 3 very familiar stories of hospitality from the texts we read.

All three stories share common points: The first common point is “hospitality to strangers.” In the Hebrew culture, the Greek and Latin words for host, guest and hospitality all include meaning of “loving strangers or enemies.” Hospitality to strangers and even to one’s enemy was highly valued in the Bedouin culture, which Abraham comes from. Especially since their homes were in the desert, an oasis, or stopping place was a mutual gift that desert people could offer each other because there were no hotels or restaurants in the desert in those days.

In our first text of Genesis, Abraham offered warm hospitality to total strangers who appeared at his door out of nowhere. In our second text in Matthew, people offered hospitality to the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned and homeless. They were the people who were marginalized as “strangers” in their own society. Both groups in the Matthew text, who offered help or didn’t offer help to the needy, couldn’t imagine what they did or didn’t do to the poor, hungry, naked, sick, imprisoned and homeless meant that they did it or didn’t do it to Jesus himself.

Jesus came to this world as a stranger; as a homeless baby, as an adult with no place to lay his head and died homeless on a cross, crying out “God, why are you forsaking me.” By what and how Jesus

preached, taught, and lived he was a total stranger to many people in his days.

Many texts in the gospel witness that Jesus offered warm hospitality to the poor, sick, crippled, slaves, women, widows, orphans, homeless, tax collectors and sinners who were strangers in his days. When Jesus says, “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners” means that he came to welcome strangers.

Larry Boyce, a total stranger in San Francisco, knocked on eleven church doors, telling them “*I have AIDS. I will paint your church for a place to stay.*” All eleven churches said “NO” perhaps because he was a stranger with AIDS. He knocked on the 12th Church, which was the Old First Presbyterian Church in San Francisco, which welcomed this stranger and offered him a place to stay. Larry Boyce turned out to be a very famous conceptual artist. He died 9 months later leaving his gorgeous art work on the church ceiling. I saw it when I visited the church.

You have been offering hospitality to the homeless, strangers in New Haven area with hot meals, warm clothes and winter boots in a loving and caring spirit. You also have overseas mission groups doing a wonderful work for strangers. Praise the Lord for what you have been doing for strangers here and overseas.

The second common point is that the position of the hosts and the guests was convertible: In our first text, Abraham, started out as a host but he became a guest when he received good news of having a child at his old age. In our second text, hosts who cared for the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned and the homeless, became guests into the eternal home on the final judgment day. Children’s prayers “*come, Lord Jesus, be our guest!*” recognizes Jesus coming as our guest. In Rev. 3:20 Jesus places himself in guest and host position saying that “*Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, [as your guest] and you with me;*” “eating with Jesus” makes him our host and makes us his guests. Mark 2:15-17 witnesses that Jesus ate dinner at the sinner’s house as a guest, but as their host, Jesus invited other sinners to his table. He was a guest and a host there. We have been Jesus’ guests for most of our lives receiving grace and salvation. Hosting needy people in our time makes us Jesus’ host.

The third common point is that all three hosts offered their best

for their guests: In our first text, Abraham extended an extraordinary welcome to the strangers with a magnificent feast using his best resource, young calf, flour and oil, and offered himself as their servant. In our second text, the food, clothes, water, time, energy, and money they shared with the poor were their precious resources that they would need for their own survival. In the third text, at his last table with his disciples, Jesus took the bread and cup, and said “this is my body broken for you and this cup is the new covenant in my blood.” What he was offering for his guests was his own life. In John 6: 35, 53-56 Jesus reiterates this point very clearly by saying, “*I am the bread of life. Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you.*” The first two hosts shared their best material resources they had. But in the 3rd story, Jesus gave his own life for his guests. There will be nothing better or greater than to give one’s own life.

When we hosted homeless women in Seattle, we used to cook the best meal in town every week for the homeless as if we were cooking for Jesus himself. We offered brand new lingerie for homeless women. I wanted to give them the best, brand new and well-fitting underwear to uplift their self-esteem. However, no matter what we may have done, we couldn’t beat Jesus who gave his own life.

The fourth common point is that the hospitality that was offered by hosts came back to the hosts as blessings. The hospitality Abraham offered (host) to strangers (guests) came back as a blessing for Abraham and Sarah to have a child in their old age. The hospitality offered by the Matthew community for the poor, hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, imprisoned and homeless came back to the hosts as a blessing into eternal life. In Luke 14: 13-14 Jesus said, “When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, and you will be blessed. In 1 King 17:9 a widow was so poor that she had only one meal left for herself and her son. But when she (host) fed Elijah with that last meal, God blessed her by filling up all of her jars with oil until she ran out of jars. Yesterday, Jackie said that people who have been helping her homeless church are all doing well in their business or at jobs at such a difficult time when too many businesses are failing and so many people are being laid off. I am sure your sacrificial sharing with the poor will come back to you as blessings.

Today is also your Annual Mission Sunday. Dr. John Buchannan, former moderator of Presbyterian Church (USA) said “*Mission is why*

we are here,” and “*the Church exists for the world.*” Emil Brunner, a German theologian said “*the church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.*” Your own Rev. John Wesley said “*we should keep only what we need to survive and must give away the rest for the poor.*” John Wesley lived his life doing exactly what he preached. Douglas Meeks, professor of the Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C is critical by going one step further, saying that the attempt to acquire more than necessary, and especially the consumption of surplus, as robbery of the poor.

Dr. Buchanan reported that a recent study conducted by the Church Growth Strategy Team of the Presbyterian Church (USA) revealed that growing churches share one common characteristic – that is a commitment to mission. In spite of theological and liturgical diversity, growing mainline churches are extending their love and compassion into the neighborhoods and cities, the nation and the world. On the other hand, declining churches are absorbing all their resources for their own survival.

We are living in the wealthiest country in the world. There are few nations that give aid to poor countries like the U.S. does. There are few nations that accept refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers and offer them new opportunities and new life like the U.S. does. However, in such an affluent and gracious nation, 45 million people suffer from poverty, 3.5 million people experience homelessness every year and nearly a million every night. UNICEF and WHO reported that in developing countries, 6 million children each year, 30,500 children die from hunger every day.

By partaking the bread and wine this morning, we are invited as guests to Jesus’ cross. The Lord’s Table is telling us that he sacrificed for us as our host and called us to be the sacrificial hosts for others here and overseas. The communion is more than memorial. Hospitality is more than inviting someone to the dinner. This means we cannot be comfortable where we are. We need to re-examine our personal life, our society, our nation and the world. We are called to live out the command of the Lord’s Table in our reality.

Therefore, let us come now to the Lord’s Table not with an empty hands just to receive the bread and wine but with hands filled with commitments and determinations as to how we you going to respond to Jesus’ table. May God bless you all at this Table. Amen.

14. Easter Sunday Sermon delivered at Indiana Korean Pres.

Church for Korean & English speaking group
2004

April 11,

Scripture Tex: John 20: 18:

*Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord';
and she told
them that he had said these things to her.*

Sermon Title: "Those who have seen the Lord."

INTRODUCTION

Since young people are going to be in this service, I was asked to preach this sermon in English. Those who speak only Korean may read the Korean language sermon on the screen. I am grateful to spend last few days with you all. Maunday Thursday evening we tried to experience what Jesus did by washing member's feet. Good Friday evening, we reflected upon Jesus' experience of dying on the cross and also 7 words Jesus spoke on the cross and attempted to participate in his suffering. Yesterday, Saturday, we reflected upon those who lie in the tomb -homeless people. We discussed what the churches can do as a mission for the homeless. This morning, Easter, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I chose John 20: 18 with my sermon title, "I have seen the Lord." I adopted this verse 18 as the theme verse for the Church of Mary Magdalene, a homeless women's congregation in Seattle I founded and served as a pastor.

I wanted homeless women meet Jesus and rise to a new life.

You have been hearing the Easter message each year. All four gospels report Easter stories with a little variation. To talk about Easter we must first talk about Jesus' death because without dying there couldn't be a story of rising. But I am not going to preach on the death too long this the Easter morning. Many people and even Jesus' disciples in those days expected Jesus to be the powerful liberator of Israel from the Roman domination. Since Jesus displayed his power in teaching, healing, and even raising the dead, disciples could not imagine how possibly he could suffer on the cruel cross and die. When

the execution on the cross really happened, Jesus' disciples might have gone into a shock, scared to death and scattered except Peter, John, and a few women. Peter hung around to see what was going on, but denied his relationship with Jesus. In short, Jesus suffered, died and buried in a tomb.

Firstly, on the third day while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene visited Jesus' tomb. To her shock she met the risen Lord appeared to her. If that happens to any of us we might faint from the shock. Wouldn't we? Jesus commissioned her saying; "*Go to my brothers and tell them I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*" She might have run as fast as she could, was running out of breath, and she shouted on top of her lung to other disciples "I have seen the Lord." "I have seen the Lord." Of course, different Gospels report his appearance in variation to have him appeared to other disciples. Mary Magdalene became the first person to see the risen Lord, the first person commissioned to deliver that message and the first person who went out to the world with the Easter news. Dr. Chang, theology professor Ewha Women's University, Korea claims that with Mary Magdalene's witness, "*I have seen the Lord*" the Christianity has already begun.

Secondly, how do we understand the resurrection? Of course the Christian doctrine believes in Jesus' resurrection into the same body form. Most of us have faith in that. But many scholars metaphorically interpret the resurrection. Let me introduce some of them: St. Paul, the great theologian would say in I Cor. 15: 35-40, "*But someone will ask, How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?*"³⁶ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.³⁷ And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.³⁹⁴⁰ There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another.

Isn't he saying that seed we plant doesn't resurrect as a seed but in to different body? If you sow little tiny apple seed it comes back as an apple not as an apple seed.

Peter proclaims in the I Pet 1:3-9, *God has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* Another theologian claims, "*Easter liberates us from our unconscious and subconscious fear and threats and give us a new birth into a living hope.*" Theologian, William

J. Carl III says “*Resurrection means a living, breathing, ongoing conversation between God, humanity and all creation.*” According to Jesus’ Scholar Marcus Borg “*Easter is God’s “yes” to Jesus and God’s “no” to the powers that killed him. That is the affirmation that he is the decisive disclosure of what God is like. Therefore, Easter story is God’s story although it Jesus’ story because God brought the resurrection.*” We can attempt to explain as best as we can but we have to believe in it. It ceases to be faith when it can be explained fully.

Thirdly, something happened to those who had seen Jesus: Mary Magdalene: Bible writers didn’t seem to want to say too much about Mary Magdalene. In those days women are not allowed to testify on anything. But all four gospels write about Mary’s testimony to Jesus resurrection. Many theologians are sure that she served the first century church as a very important disciple. She even wrote a gospel but it didn’t get into our Bible.

Peter, Jesus’ disciple, denied Jesus three times on the night when Jesus was arrested. But after the risen Jesus appeared to him he was transformed to a man of courage who boldly witnessed to Jesus as the Lord and Messiah without fear of persecution. If you remember seeing the movie *Quovadis*, a large fire broke in Rome and the King Nero blamed Christians for it and began to persecute them. As Peter runs away from persecution, he meets a young man on the road. The young man asks Peter, “*Where are you going?*” He answered, “*I am just running from the burning city, Rome.*” Peter asked the young man, “*Where are YOU going?*” The young man answered, “*I am going to Rome where you deserted my people.*” Then Peter recognized it was Jesus, and then he too returned to the burning city. Historian Eusebius and Origen write that Peter went to Rome, and as an old man, he was crucified head downwards, during the reign of Nero, probably in AD 64.

Saul was on the way to Damascus to arrest and persecute more Christians. Paul’s encounter with risen Jesus on the Damascus road caused him to experience the total transformation: His name was changed to Paul. He was called and commissioned as Apostle to the Gentiles. He became the greatest witness to Jesus throughout the Christian history and wrote about half the New Testament. Eusebius, the father of church history and 4th century bishop of Caesarea, recorded that Paul was again taken to Rome and executed in Nero’s

persecution in AD 67 just as happened to Peter. Tertullian, the Father of African Church in the 2nd century records that Paul was beheaded.

Albert Schweitzer who owned several Doctor's degrees including MD decided to go to Africa and serve the poor when he encountered Jesus. Mother Theresa gave her entire life serving the poor/sick in India after she encountered Jesus. Martin Luther King Jr., gave his life for the non-violent movement for the rights of the Black people in the United States which resulted in making him a Nobel Prize winner. Your own pastor and some other people in your congregation must have seen the Lord and transformed to do what they are doing.

If some of you feel that you had never seen Jesus, my testimony will help you discern that you too may have seen the Lord. I have seen the Lord so many times but I will share a few incidences with you. When I was in high school, a woman preacher came to our school to preach at our chapel hour. While many kids were bored to death, I was so inspired by her I rented a room in her neighborhood for little while to see her and talk to her every evening after school. I wanted to become like her. I think I had seen the Lord through her. I had seen the Lord again in my last year of the high school. Our church had 100-day prayer meeting at 4:30 every morning. No matter what, even when I was very sick, I would never miss one. I asked God what I must do in my future. When we were about reaching the completion of 100 days, I got a message from God that I must go to theological seminary. I think I had seen the Lord through that prayer meeting. I had seen the Lord in time of my despair and hopelessness when I lost a 17 years old son in 1978. My days were so dark and hopeless that I felt like a blind. Heavy guilt was crushing on me and I wanted to die. I refused God's compassion, love, forgiveness, and comfort and demanded God to abandon me and let the earth open and swallow me. One day I was crying my heart out at his grave side. I felt a warm hand on my shoulder. I looked up and it was a gentleman who too was crying. It turned out that he was visiting his father's grave next to my son's and later he told me that he had a son of my son's age. When I saw tears running down his face, I felt that I had seen the Lord who was crying with me. After that experience I couldn't stop reading the Bible all the time. Reading Jesus' life stories, values, teachings, his suffering and rising, I found overflowing joy and hope and felt like my eyes were opened. I announced to my husband "My eyes are open and I had seen the Lord."

That experience motivated me to be ordained and serve the Lord. I am here today as a preacher. I had seen the Lord in my dream on April 3rd 1988 Easter morning, which was a year after my ordination. In my dream I was standing inside a little church, on a wooden floor. God spoke to me out of huge non-burning fire and told me, “*plant a cross*” [pointing to the door inside the church] *and it will grow through the roof.*” I was a campus pastor then at the University of Washington. I was pondering on the dream for several years trying to do better spiritual programs with students. This awesome vision eventually led me to develop a homeless women’s church in Seattle in 1991. I served it for 7 years.

After that Rev. Barbara Dua, then director of Women’s Ministries Program of General Assembly, got a message from God in her dream to talk to me. She hired me and for the past 7 years I have been on speaking tour on behalf of the General Assembly.

While I was serving the homeless I kept seeing Jesus in the face of the poor, hungry, sick, substance addicted homeless. So I serve them just as Matt. 25 says “*When you feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned and welcome the homeless, you have done it for me.*”

This week, I have seen the Lord in you also. I hope those of you who did not know when you had seen the Lord could come to realization that you too have seen the Lord.

Lastly, we cannot just celebrate Easter as a past history. Professor Coffin is helping us to conclude, saying, “*Easter represents a demand as well as a promise, a demand that we pledge our loyalty to the risen Christ. That means an end to all loyalties, to all people and to all institutions that crucify.*”

For example, I don’t see how in our time we can proclaim allegiance to the risen Lord and remain indifferent to people who suffer from poverty, disease and homelessness in this country. 3.5 million people experience homelessness every year. How can we think that this risen Lord would applaud an economic system that produces poverty. We have 40 million people suffering from poverty and 40% of them are children. Or how can we think that this Risen Lord would applaud USA war in Iraq that is killing so many Iraqis and our own people.

Our Risen Lord invites us to get out of our tombs. With help from Christ, we need to empty our own tombs. What are our tomb? Greed for material wealth, economic and military power, superiority, house,

cars, sports, sex, and domination; our hatred, racism, classism, sexism, and all forms of discrimination. All these are our bombs. Jesus modeled for us to get out of our own tombs. He had overcome all the betrayals, disappointments, and all forms of death. He is inviting us to crack our own tombs. Praise the Lord who did it for us and will help us to do it. That is Easter for us. Amen.

15. Sermon delivered at St. Andrews Pres. Church June 25, 2006

Scripture Text: Matt 25: 35-36, 40-46

Sermon theme: "Finding Jesus Again"

INTRODUCTION

I am glad to be here this morning and worship God with you. When your pastor asked me to preach today, I e-mailed him saying, Oh, my God, you want me to preach on June 25, Sunday? It is a very special and emotional and memorial day of nightmare for me. It is the day the Korean War broke out. I was 15 then. It was Sunday, 56 years ago, in 1950. That Sunday morning, my brother, a Korean Army soldier, left home in his plain clothes to have a good day off. After that Sunday, I have never seen my brother again. He was a 30 years old, husband of 27 year-old young wife and a father of 2 and 4 year-old boys. He was a son of my mother who wouldn't make it without him. He was my father figure.

4 years prior to the war, my family escaped from North Korea leaving our wealth and all. We had a severe housing problem in our refugee life in South Korea. My brother enlisted in the Korean Army for free military housing. A year later war broke out. He died for the apartment. That war took the lives of 3 million Koreans, 600,000 Chinese and 54,000 American soldiers. My family has been grieving for the past 56 years. My mother grieved until her last breath. We know how devastating the war was and caused us to suffer forever. Is there anyone in this congregation who lost someone in Korean War?

My sermon theme from the Matthew text is "Finding Jesus Again." This theme arose from the assumption that we lost Jesus. Most of us had Jesus sometime in our life. But we must find him again because along the way of materialism and our modern culture we either lost him or misplaced him. The Text from Matthew is one of many texts that teach us where to find Jesus.

This text is known as one of Jesus' last sermons on earth. On the final day, Jesus appears as a king to judge people. The criterion of His final judgment was whether or not they helped people who were suffering from hunger, thirst, nakedness, illness, imprisonment and homelessness. The bottom line of the final judgment was that when people provided the basic needs for the poor, they did it for Jesus himself. When they didn't do it, they didn't help Jesus himself. In other words, Jesus is identifying himself with those suffering, which means he is suffering with them and in them. Let us take up the three major issues Jesus is talking about in our text and relate them to our reality today.

Jesus' first issue was hunger, thirst, nakedness and homeless. I name them "poverty." According to Hanson, under the oppressive socio-economic and political system of the Roman Empire, the first-century Palestine had basically two economic classes: upper and lower. The elite controlled the produce from most of the land and the labor of most people. A small upper class accounted for ten percent or less of the population. The rest of the people, likely ninety percent or more, were in the lower class. They were mostly poor peasants. At the bottom of the bottom were the outcasts—peasants forced off their land, wandering vagabonds, beggars, and lepers.

In Galilee, where much of Jesus' ministry took place, there existed both the extremely rich and the miserably poor. The *few* lived in luxury while the *many* lived in poverty. Often the poor had to accept slavery and prostitution which meant a total loss of all their rights. The poor were "non-persons," "sub-humans," and "human fodder." Jesus chose to stand with them.

Today we too have oppressive economic system: American style economic system has been so effective that it has brought unprecedented wealth. But it has also brought unprecedented poverty and homelessness and an ever-widening disparity between the rich and poor. In King County alone, on any given night over 8,000 people experience homelessness. More than one in four American working families now earn wages so low that they have difficulty surviving financially. Current economic policy results in constant shortage of funds for traditional social services such as mental health, child welfare, subsidized health care, food stamps, and housing, which have always been under-funded. Does it make any sense when too many citizens

suffer in poverty and homelessness in such an affluent country? Because our culture places such a high value on individual competition, achievement and self-sufficiency, the American public has learned to value human beings on the basis of how much salary they make. We devalue and dehumanize the poor and the homeless who cannot support themselves.

Michael Lerner, Jewish scholar, the author of “the Left Hand of God,” said, “This way of organizing our society promotes selfishness and materialism. Kawachi and Kennedy of Harvard claim, “No matter what the level of material comfort or standard of living, Americans want more. We want to shop more and spend more to acquire an ever-expanding list of necessities and ‘must-have’ items.’ Our new disease is ‘shopping disorder,’ a form of addiction includes compulsive shopping, competitive shopping, and revenge shopping.” A study of the relationship of income inequality to mortality rates across the U.S. found that the greater inequality in the distribution of income was associated with higher rates of premature death from heart attack, cancer, murder, and infant mortality.

Jesus’ second issue was caring for the sick: I name it “health care.” Jesus encountered many sick and disabled people throughout his ministry—the blind, the lepers, the mentally ill, the paralyzed, and many others. Some of them were homeless beggars. Society judged them as “unclean” or “demon-possessed or sinners.” They were despised, marginalized, avoided, and alienated as permanent “others.” When the sick were women and Gentiles, the treatment was worse because of their gender, race and social status. No wonder why Jesus had to offer them medical care by healing them.

We too have health care problems today. More than forty-six million Americans are currently uninsured and unable to pay for their own health care. WHO ranked the countries of the world in terms of overall health performance, and the U.S. fell into thirty-seventh place. When it came to evaluating the fairness of countries’ health care, the U.S. ranked still lower, to fifty-fourth, or last place among the OECD nations (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development).

Jesus’ third issue was Imprisonment. When the pressures of rents, taxation, tolls, duties, and confiscation became too heavy for peasants to bear, one means of extreme resistance to the imperial powers and wealthy elites was banditry. Groups of bandits raided country estates

and Roman garrison for both survival and revenge against those who had forced them from their lands into poverty. The Roman means of dealing with rebels and bandits was imprisonment, torture and public execution by crucifixion.

We too have imprisonment issues today: The U.S. incarceration rate is high compared to that of the European Union. More than two million Americans are currently in prison. That's nearly one quarter of the entire prison population in the world (U.S. make up less than 6 percent of the world population). While European Union member states average 87 prisoners per 100,000 population, the United States averages 685 prisoners per 100,000 population. In the year 2000, roughly one out of every three black males between eighteen and thirty four years of age was under the active supervision of the criminal justice system. The number of female prisoners has quadrupled in the past 10 years. Sixty-five percent of women in state prison reported to be mothers. Many of those leaving jail and prison have chronic health issues, no housing, little education or job training, and generally lack resources to reintegrate into society. They keep committing crimes, thus making prison and the street their permanent home.

In fact, Jesus was one of those described above: He was born homeless (Luke 2:7) in a manger. He was homeless in his infancy as an exile in Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15). He grew up in a poor and semi-pagan Galilee. Jesus had no regular income during his public ministry, nor did he have a home of his own. Jesus was 'Galilean,' 'Jewish' and 'peasant.' He was landless [homeless]. Jesus arrived on the scene and operated from the very margin of his society. He was finally crucified as one of the criminals on the cross. He died homeless on the cross crying out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me."

Many scholars agree that Jesus' major concern was defending the poor. Now we can see why Jesus judged people on the basis of their help or NO help to the suffering and told them to find him in the poor, sick, imprisoned and homeless. In the Bible, there are many other stories of people who found Jesus. Mary Magdalene, bent-over woman, hemorrhaging woman, a woman caught in adultery found Jesus in his care, love, understanding and compassion. Women found Jesus beneath his cross identifying their pain with his. Many sick, despised, dehumanized social outcasts found Jesus through his compassionate healing, love and care and his forgiveness of their sins.

Zacchaeus found Jesus and became able to give half of what he owned to the poor.

There were people who never found the true Jesus. The rich young lawyer could not accept Jesus' advice to sell what he had, give it to the poor and follow him. He never found true Jesus. The rich man who used to allow poor Lazarus to eat bread crumbs from his table and his dog licked his wounds, never found Jesus. In our text today, those who didn't help the poor had never found Jesus.

Do we hear him calling us to come way down to the margin of our own society and meet him there? Many of us who are NOT poor or suffering. Where can we find Jesus in our reality? Michael Lerner claims, "We have been trapped into thinking that fulfillment comes from achieving material success. But there is enormous spiritual hunger in America because human beings are Theo-tropic. It is a yearning for a new way to think and a new way to live. It is a yearning to be connected to God. You and I can witness that Jesus is our new way, new meaning, new value we are looking for. Then how and where can we find Jesus? Wesley said, "If religion is to be the response to the action of God, it must begin where God begins, among the poor, the despised, the oppressed, and the marginalized. For McAfee Brown, "*to know God is 'to achieve justice for the poor.'*"

This caused Luther to see Christ in the needy neighbor. "To meet him where he is, we have to go way down to the margin of our society where Jesus takes his residence. In order to do so, we have to disengage ourselves from what we have been clinging to. As Bonhoeffer warned, it will be costly. We have to give up some of what we own.

I have been to 31 states and met hundreds of people who are way down there at the margin to work with Jesus to help meet the survival needs of the poor. Some of you have been down there already with Jesus. Good for you!

As a concrete way to go down there to the margin, some do volunteer work, or give generously and even sacrificially. Some change their life style by eating less, shop less, dress cheap and donate the money to the charity. Some individuals or churches open rooms to welcome the homeless.

Over 20 churches in King County have hosted homeless tent city. Some people participate in public policy advocacy to change policies that create and perpetuate poverty and homelessness. These include but are not limited to building low income housing, support funds for section 8 housing, increase minimum wage, discharge policy for prisoners, and universal health care.

As you see, finding Jesus wouldn't allow us to stay where we are, focusing only on our personal, inner spiritual matters. The job to find Jesus causes us to move and act, which won't be simple and easy. Hope lies in you and me and many others who are finding Jesus again. Finding Jesus and standing with him who stand with the poor margin, and sharing our blessings with the poor will lead us to personal, societal, national and global shalom for all God's people. Amen.

16. World Communion Sunday delivered at Cheshire United

Cheshire United Methodist Church, New Haven, CT – October 1, 2006

Scripture Texts:

Ex: 12: 11-14 (Deut. 16:3, 8 – Origin of Communion)

Luke 22: 14-15, 19-20; (Matt) 26:17-20 –Jesus' meaning of Communion.

Acts 2: 43-46 (I Cor. 11:17-29) – Meaning of Communion for the first century believers.

Sermon theme: Liberating Communion

Today we are celebrating World Communion Sunday. I wonder if this is a coincidence or God's plan that I preached here on the World Communion Sunday 3 years ago and today again. Anyway, I am glad to be here. Thank you for inviting me to worship God with you today.

On behalf of Agape Homeless Church Board, Jackie and I bring you warm words of THANKS for being a wonderful, tireless, consistent, accountable and generous partner with Agape Church that has been led by Jacky Yu. The Korean way to say big thanks is giving you a big bow. So I bow to you this morning. Thank you very much for supporting the Agape Mission.

My sermon theme comes from 3 Scripture texts is "Liberating Communion." I am going to make a few points about the Holy Communion.

Firstly, the Holy Communion we celebrate has its origin in the Jewish Passover meal: The Israelites were suffering under Egyptian bondage and oppression for 430 years. Ex. 3: 7 reports that God heard their groaning pain. A compassionate God couldn't sit in heaven and watch their suffering; and God decided to come down to rescue the suffering Israel.

Ex: 12: 11-14 reports that on the night God was delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, God instructed the Israelites to slaughter a lamb, and each family put the blood on their two doorposts, have loins girded, sandals on their feet, staff in their hand, and eat the roasted lamb and unleavened bread fast because they were to leave the land of Egypt in great haste. When the angel of the Lord passed through Egypt that night to strike down every first born in the land of Egypt, God would see the blood on the doorposts and pass over the house of Israel, and God would spare their lives. This experience was called "Passover." Exodus was an event of ending Israel's homelessness in Egyptian bondage. The meal they ate that night was called "Pass-Over Meal." It was Exodus meal – liberating meal and Holy Communion.

In Deut. 16, God commands Israel to remember this liberation experience through all the generations by eating the Passover meal. Ever since that time the Jews celebrate the Passover. But it was not just a memorial of their liberation but also came with a responsibility for Israel to liberate others from poverty, hunger, illness and oppressions. When they refused to do so, God abandoned Israel into homelessness. Babylonian exile was one of their homeless experiences.

Secondly, Jesus' last supper with disciples was not just a simple last supper.

The Lukan text witnesses that Jesus eagerly desired to eat this particular Passover meal with his disciples before the crucifixion because he knew this was going to be his last Passover meal with them. Jesus gives a very special meaning to this last Passover meal. He took the bread and said "*this is my body broken for you.*" He then took the cup and said "*this is my blood shed for you.*" I often wonder if his disciples understood what he was saying. I don't think they did. His last Passover meal meant his death on the cross.

The root of His suffering and death was his perfect *agape* love for us. The Greek word *agape* means unconditional love which is wholly

unselfish, *Agape* surpasses self-interest, passion, friendship, and benevolence. *Agape* is more than unselfish feeling. It acts. It loves unlovable, even enemies. Compassion and forgiveness are the essence of *agape*. He loves all of us unto death to liberate us from our pain.

In Luke 4: 18 Jesus said, I came to liberate the poor from poverty, liberate the blind eyes of the hopeless to see, liberate the blind eyes of the powerful to see the weak and the poor, to free the captives of hunger, illness, homelessness, and liberate the captives of power, greed, materialism and consumerism.

Jesus proved that he himself was the Passover meal for the world through his teaching, life, death and resurrection. In John 6 he said he was the bread and drink for us. He also said that without eating his bread which is his body and drinking his drink which is his blood we have nothing to do with him.

As God commanded Israel to remember the Pass-Over Meal, Jesus too commanded his disciples to remember his Last Supper, not just as a memorial but take responsibility to liberate others from all forms of oppression.

Thirdly, the group of people who took Jesus' command seriously and faithfully was the first century church. As the text in Acts witnesses, disciples and the early church not only remembered Jesus' Last Supper and repeated sharing the meals but also lived it's meaning by not claiming any personal ownership of material resources and brought them together and shared with the poor so that there was no one in need among them as described in Acts 4.

My last point is how can we live Jesus' liberating meal, the Holy Communion in our contemporary world? Yes, you have been doing a wonderful job in helping the homeless and I bowed to you a few minutes ago to express our heartfelt thanks. However, we are challenged to critically look at the root causes that create and perpetuate poverty and homelessness in this affluent country.

When we stand before Jesus' Table we must seriously reflect upon our life and re-assess who we are.

Our economic system has been so effective that it has brought us an unprecedented wealth so that you and I enjoy the most affluent and

comfortable life in the world. However we also created unprecedented poverty. New Haven City doesn't have enough beds for all your homeless people. Your city opens up an overflow shelter only in Cold season. For the rest of the year, throw them in to the streets. In the park around Yale University many homeless are visible. Your City took benches out of the park wishing the homeless to disappear. But how about when you and I need to sit there too.

We are living in an addicted society: not just the homeless are addicted to drugs and alcohol, but we all are addicted to something. Dr. May, a psychiatrist said, we all are addicted to money, wealth, power, sports, house, cars, games, and food." I am one of those addicts.

The Holy Communion we are about to partake must liberate us from our addiction, materialism, individualism, racism, classism, all kinds of walls and gaps between the rich and poor as well as our mistakes and sins. To experience liberation we must bring our sins to the communion table and ask forgiveness. After we experience our own liberation we need to liberate others. All God's people say, Amen.

17. Palm Sunday sermon delivered at Madrona Pres. Church, Seattle.

April 1, 2007

Scripture Text: Luke 23: 1-25 Phil. 2: 5-8

Sermon theme: Verdict: Subversive Jesus

Greetings and Introduction.

Thank you for inviting me back today to lead your worship service. It is always good to see you again and to worship God with you. Your secretary e-mailed me the lectionary texts for this week. As you all know this week is the last week of Lenten season. This particular Sunday is known as the "Palm Sunday," a Sunday before Easter. Palm Sunday was the first day of Jesus' last week on earth. It is the first day of his passion week. Therefore, it was the darkest days in Jesus' whole life.

The Lectionary from the Gospel of Luke covers the whole thing that went on in Jerusalem. It starts with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Last Supper with his disciples, Judah's betrayal, Jesus' arrest, trial, death verdict and ends with crucifixion. There are so many themes that we can pick from this text. I chose the "*Verdict: Subversive Jesus*" as our theme. This verdict led Jesus to the execution on the cross.

Many of us remember Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was so popular in his peace movement promoting equality for everyone by ending racial discrimination in this country. He was assassinated and Jesus was crucified.

I want to make a few points:

First of all, it is very important for us to review and remember reasons why he got such a verdict and was crucified on the cross as a young man of age 33. As reported in Luke's gospel, his verdict didn't come from a judge but loudly announced by the whole crowd who shouted, "*this man is perverting and stirs up people by teaching from Galilee to Jerusalem and therefore crucify him, crucify him.*"

Thus their verdict for Jesus was perversion. Perversion and Subversion carry very much same meaning: *The Subversive Jesus* is also a title of a book written by Robert Henderson, a Presbyterian scholar. What are the meanings of these words? The Webster Dictionary defines "pervert" "*to cause to turn aside or away from what is generally done or accepted.*" The same dictionary defines "subversion" to mean "*to cause overturn or overthrow from the foundation.*" We usually say, Jesus was accused of what he was not trying to do. But let us ask ourselves if that accusation was all wrong? That is what we are going to examine by reviewing his thinking, words, teaching and behavior. Henderson, the author of "Subversive Jesus" quoted the late French sociologist-theologian Jacques Ellul in his book, "*Subversion of Christianity.*" Ellul explains that *the rebellion of the creation against the Creator was a subversion of God's design, and that the work of Jesus was to subvert the subversion!* I borrowed the term "Subversive" from these scholars.

To understand why Jesus was perceived as perverting and subversive we need to understand the socioeconomic political context of his day. The land of Palestine was invaded and occupied by the Romans. The different parts of Palestine were successively ruled by Roman client-rulers. In 37 B.C.E. Herod the Great, a Jew, came to power in Palestine as a Roman puppet King. He was a symbol of oppressive tyranny which triggered a wide-spread revolt across the land during Jesus' childhood. While the small number of elite class accounted for ten percent or less of the population competed for the right to control, and tax peasant families, ninety percent or more of the people were usually poor peasants. These empires were exploitative

and peasants were very poor farmers or holding unclean' low class occupations. At the bottom of the bottom were the outcasts—peasants forced off their land, wandering vagabonds, beggars, and lepers. Roman armies periodically tried to smother peasants' revolts by ravaging villages slaughtering the elderly and taking thousands back to Rome to sell as slaves. Roman soldiers crucified hundreds of people on crosses along the public roads, as a warning for other would-be rebels. At times they crucified, butchered, or enslaved the entire populations. In Galilee, where much of Jesus' ministry took place, there existed both the extremely rich and the miserably poor. The *few* lived in luxury while the *many* lived in poverty. Temple system was also corrupted. Goods and services, raw materials, crops, animals—all flowed to this central point. There, these goods were redistributed in ways not necessarily benefiting their original producers. Religious ideology legitimated and sustained this arrangement. The purity system created a world with sharp social boundaries between pure and impure, righteous and sinner, whole and not whole, male and female, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile. The Oppressive Patriarchy denied women's rights, abused, exploited and oppressed them. Under such a social and economic system, the sick, disabled, the blind, lepers, the mentally ill, the paralyzed, and tax collectors, women, children, widows, orphans, country people, prostitutes and sinners and gentiles were unclean outsiders in Jewish society. Jesus himself was one of them by being born homeless, raised homeless or poor, no place to lay his head during his public ministry and died homeless on the cross feeling being forsaken by his family, friends, disciples, his own people and even by God. None of several political-religious parties, the Essenes, the Zealots, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Priests and Levites, the Roman government of Jesus' day accepted Jesus.

In to such unwelcoming socio-political, religious context Jesus came as a subversive person. There was a profound difference between the approach of Jesus and that of all the other political, social, and religious groups of the period. Sadducees and Pharisees, Zealots, and Essenes all had in common their willingness to accept the Jewish social system; the monarchy, the temple, the priesthood, etc. But Jesus did not. He didn't agree with any of them.

Secondly, Jesus' response to such a social system that was abusive and oppressive was subversive action. Jesus rejected all of that was

going on and called for radical change and renewal. Jesus appeared to be quite angry at them by calling some of them “*white-washed tombs*” and others “*a bunch of snakes* and called *Herod a fox*.”

Since all these unjust and oppressive rules were subversion to the original will and order of God, Jesus became *counter-subversive*. Jesus didn't attempt to overturn the political government of Romans but he attempted to transform his contemporary values, oppressive traditions, policies and practices. We need to realize how alien his presence and teaching were to his society because Jesus redefined everything as Henderson points out; when Jesus said, “*I am the Light*,” he exposed the darkness in human hearts and the world. When he said “*I am the truth*,” he exposed all that was false. When he said, “*I am the Way*,” he exposed the false paths to God, the alien allegiances, and idolatries of the day. When he said, “*I am the Life*” he exposed all that was part of the Death; When he said, “*I am the Bread of Life*,” he exposed the false shepherds who did not feed God's hungry sheep with true food; This is the flavor of the “*upside-down kingdom*” and “*the blue print of the New Creation*.” It was radically subversive and perverting their usual thinking and belief system.

Jesus lived what he taught in a life of humble servant hood focusing his priority on those helpless and crushed by unjust systems, those physically afflicted, those longing for God's reality, or those wearied by impossible burdens of life. The poor, sick, women, gentiles, social outcasts and sinners loved and welcomed his teachings. He gathered large crowds wherever he went. Rumors had begun to spread about his healings and exorcisms, his radical statements about Roman taxation and the Jerusalem temple. They feared his recruitment of a large group, and the crowds spoke of him in terms of traditional Judean kingship. And, thus Jesus became a threat to both the Roman rulers of Palestine and to the Jewish leaders.

A large crowd came together and demanded a verdict of crucifixion for he was subversive. Pilate pretended to give in the demands of the crowd. He had all the power to save Jesus. But he announced death verdict, because public crucifixion was usually a great damper on popular movement. Same thing happened to many peacemakers in our contemporary world. Henderson calls this Jesus *subversive* and even *counter-subversive*.

The sheer *radicalness* of who Jesus was, the sheer *otherness* of

what he taught, the sheer *unexpectedness* of what he did, this continued was far too *subversive* (and controversial) for many, if not most, who heard them for the first time. Henderson concludes that Jesus was executed as a political, social, and religious troublemaker because he was a threat to the system of his day. But we confess in faith that he died for our sins to save us.

Thirdly, what his death means? Henderson asserts that the Cross is the heart of restoring *Shalom*. The Cross is far too *irrational* for the rational, and it is far too *irreligious* for the religious. The Cross really does not conform to any human categories. It is beyond that which any mind could ever even imagine. It is also far too radical and disruptive and subversive and controversial for sophisticated user-friendly church marketers. The Cross is an offense to *comfort-zone Christianity*.

This cross means perfect love taught and lived by Jesus according to Bishop Spong. When his disciples forsook him, he loved his forsakers. When one of them denied him and another betrayed him, he loved the denier and the betrayer. When his enemies abused him, he loved his abusers. When they killed him, he loved his killers. He was the one condemned to die, but he gave his life away even as they took it from him. He gave forgiveness to the soldiers (Luke 23:34). He gave assurance to the penitent thief (Luke 23:43). Here was a whole human being who lived fully, who loved wastefully, and who had the courage to be himself under every set of circumstances. He was thus a human portrait of the meaning of God, understood as the source of life, the source of love, and the ground of being.

Jesus died *the death of the slave*. Jesus died *the death of a poor man*. The Son of Man from Galilee without power, without rights and without a home suffered the fate of a slave in the Roman Empire as Phil. 2 describes. In his suffering and death Jesus shared the fate of these enslaved people. Jesus was one of these people, the poorest of the poor; a tortured, abused and crucified slave. In this sense 'the sufferings of Christ' are also the sufferings of the powerless masses of the poor in his days and today.

Lastly therefore what does his subversion mean for us today? To a generation obsessed with a hyperactive quest for some elusive goal of self-fulfillment, Jesus comes plainly announcing that the way to find it

is through self-denial: “whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” To those seeking comfortable and inoffensive religion, Jesus offers the offense of the cross, he offers suffering, he offers himself as the Lamb of God by whose blood and death true peace is obtained!

Therefore, Jesus was subversive and he is requiring us to be as he was. What does that mean in our American socio-economic-political context where 40 million people suffer from poverty; where innocent young men and women die in war and drive other nation and people into a death valley to satisfy greed of a few; where people are judged and valued by what and how much they own; where people are addicted to materialism, consumerism, domination, superiority complex, nationalism, militarism, capitalism, sexism, racism and classism.

How can we the Christians become subversive in our context like Jesus was? Are we ready to take up his cross and walk with Christ? This is the question we must answer in this Passion Week of Jesus Christ who died for us.

All God’s people say “Yes” and “Amen.”

18. THANKSGIVING SERMON

Delivered at Rock Presbyterian Church, Columbus, GA. Nov. 23, 2008

Culturally mixed racially diverse congregation.

Scripture text: Luke 17: 11-19; I Thess. 5:18

Theme: Thanksgiving

Thank you very much for inviting me to preach and worship with you on this Thanksgiving Sunday. English is my second language. I ask you to bear with my Konglish which means Korean English. I hope my standing here today will be an encouragement to you that you too can make it since this old lady made it.

I chose Scripture texts from Luke 17: 11-19 and First Thessalonians 5:18.

We will reflect upon these texts under the theme of "Thanksgiving" because today is Thanksgiving Day.

While I was preparing this sermon it brought up my old memories. In 1950s and 60s, in the post - Korean War era, we could easily see lepers begging for food at the door or on the streets. Lepers were avoided at all costs because leprosy was known to be contagious and due to the rumors that lepers eat children's liver to be cured. Lepers carried scary and wired appearance with no eyebrows and deformed extremities and noses. In Korea, lepers could not live with their families nor in the cities but lived under the bridges or in remote countryside with other beggars. Positive cases were confined in the leprosarium on a remote Island. They were disowned homeless social outcasts in Korean society.

In the world where Jesus lived, lepers were also despised and abused. As Lev. 13:45-46 recorded, in the Jewish culture, lepers have worn torn clothes, let their hair be disheveled and he shall cry out, "Unclean, unclean and he shall live alone outside the community. Lepers were treated as social outcasts and sinners.

First, let us reflect upon the Scripture Texts: One day, on the way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled through the region between Galilee and Samaria. As he entered a village, ten lepers, keeping in distance, cried out to have mercy on them. Jesus said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priest," because it was a law that the priest examines and confirms that they were cleansed. As they went, they were all made clean. One of them turned back praising God with a loud voice, he threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

In the Lukan text, we see two kinds of people. One group is 9 people who were healed but never returned to thank Jesus. I cannot imagine that the other nine didn't appreciate the healing. They all must have appreciated it. But they walked away. Then and now, some people think that the world owes them a lot. These 9 lepers might have been thinking that it was unfair for them to suffer from leprosy and they deserve to be healed and they got what they deserved and they seem to have taken it for granted and walked away for good without taking time to return to thank Jesus. The Grace of God for us is so generous that we take it for granted as if we always deserve it.

In most Korean families, wives who take their husband for granted, often forget to say thanks to their husbands. Men carry a heavy burden on their shoulders as providers for their families. They often take their life when they lose their jobs or their business collapses. Many men die from overwork in severe competition for survival. Those men who used to have chips on their shoulder as somebody in Korea but in their immigrant life, they are nobody experiencing discrimination, language and cultural barrier, unfamiliar labor work, hurt pride, anger, loneliness, and alienation. When they return home, they are nagged by their wives. In their old age, many men suffer or die from lung cancer, liver cancer, stomach cancer and or prostate cancer. In homes where husbands are military personnel, they often risked their lives in the battle field. Even if women repeat their life over hundred times, they can never understand what their men go through. Women simply take their husbands for granted and seem to forget to say “Thank you.”

In the same way, husbands in Korean families seldom thank their wives for their troubles. Women experience severe morning sickness in their pregnancy, deliver children going in and out of the Sheol’s gate, raising children in deprived sleep and sacrificial care. All their lives, they cook, wash clothes, clean the house and even go to work. When they get up to 40s, their shoulder bones ache. In long lasting menopause, hot flashes agonize them. In their old age, their bladder and uterus sag. They often die from breast cancer or uterine or ovarian cancer. With estrogen decrease, osteoporosis often results in broken hips. Even if men get to be born again hundred times over they would never understand what their women go through. Men simply take women for granted and seem to forget to say “Thank you.” American husbands might express thanks to their wives more.

Parents and children, and pastors and church members, take their love and sacrifice for granted and forget to thank each other. We cannot be like the 9 lepers who took the grace of healing for granted and never returned to thank Jesus and walked away for good.

The other kind of person is one leper who came back to praise God and thank Jesus. He was a Samaritan. In those days, Jewish relations with Samaritans was very bad. In the Old Testament times, the Assyrian Empire was the most violent in the Middle East and terrorized Israel for hundreds of years. Finally in 721 B.C., the Assyrians conquered the ten northern tribes of Israel. To ease Jewish

rebellion the Assyrian king moved some Assyrians back into Israel, who intermarried with the remaining Israelites and created the Samaritans, which means mix-raced culture. Jews viewed Samaritans to be racially mixed and religiously heretics. Therefore, Jews discriminated against Samaritans and the two would not eat together, worship together, nor intermarry.

This was someone who was living in such social circumstances with pain from leprosy; he was being mortified and disowned by his family and society; and even God seemed to ignore him; he was an object of despise and abuse; he could have felt better not being born and better being dead than alive because he had to beg for food, being treated as a sinner, and his hopes, self-esteem and will to live were all crushed. He was a worthless Samaritan leper.

Under such circumstances, Jesus healed him. Can you imagine how deep his appreciation could have been? This man couldn't take the healing for granted. He knew that everything comes from God and it was God who healed him. He promptly returned, fell at Jesus feet, repeatedly exclaiming, "Praise God, praise God, thank you Jesus, thank you, Jesus."

How about us?

Do we thank God for being welcomed into this country, being allowed to have families, jobs, children, education and promise with good future and chance to own homes and wealth. There is no other country on earth that will give us such an opportunity. Would Europe do that for us? Would Russia or Japan give us such an opportunity? Do we fall at Jesus' feet and in tears exclaiming "praise God, praise God" and say "thank you, Jesus, thank you, Jesus"? Or do we keep on asking more blessings for ourselves?

Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well." The verb "made well" is the same word often translated "to be saved." For example, in Luke 19:9-10, the same word was used to say that "salvation" has come to Zacchaeus because Jesus came to seek and "to save" the lost.

What we have, then, is a story of ten being healed and one being saved. This man not only got physical healing but experienced holistic healing which included healing of body and soul together. It was blessing of holistic salvation. This is a story that truly praising God and truly thanking Jesus resulted in an unexpected holistic salvation.

Our second point is that I Thess. 5:18 advises us to thank God in all Circumstance and not just when we want to, or when we feel good, or when it is beneficial to us or when things go well but at all times in all circumstances, and everywhere: In good times and bad time alike: We must thank God even when we fall sick because we could be healed. If not, thank God for giving us courage to live with the illness. When we die suddenly, we thank God for not going through long painful process. When we suffer long pain in a slow dying, we thank God for giving us time to prepare. When we die, we thank God for not disowning but welcoming us in to God's home. When God took our husbands or wives, we thank God for leaving us families and friends to comfort us. Therefore, there is always something in all circumstances we can thank God for. If we thank God all day, we will be joyful and live long life. Because thanksgiving will produce joy. Joy will issue hormone endorphin. Endorphin will enhance immune system. The Immune system will help overcome diseases and maintain good health. And therefore, sense of gratefulness becomes the source of a long life. Giving thanks for everything in all circumstances is God's will for us.

Third Point is that Thanksgiving is contagious. When gratefulness is filled in the family it will be spilled over to our church, neighbors, society and world. Our heart-felt thanks will produce our love and service for the most vulnerable people around us. In this way we will serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a Korean couple who owns a small grocery store and a small restaurant in my neighborhood. He came to the United States with empty hands and went through lots of hardships. In their appreciation for owning their own business, they will feed 200 homeless people with gifts this coming Thursday, Thanksgiving Day. I have to fly back tomorrow night to participate in this event. The whole neighborhood thanks God for their hospitality. Thanksgiving must produce action and service for the poor. The amazing grace of our Lord, Jesus transformed all my pain and troubles into the motivation to serve the Lord by serving the homeless. I confess:

From my chronic illness I could have been dead at age 5. From the trauma I experienced I could have been damaged profoundly in my

teen years. For my sins I committed, I could have been crucified in my 20s. For my rejection to God's call, I could have been disowned by God in 30s. Lord Jesus held on to me tight in my 40s when I refused to live in my devastation of losing a child. I cannot repeat enough all my gratefulness even using the "sky" as a scroll and seawater as "ink" for all the abundant grace that Jesus had poured out on me for years.

In my deep gratitude for the amazing grace of our Lord, Jesus that saved undeserved sinner like me, I started to serve the homeless as my way of serving our Lord Jesus, as it is written in Matt. 25:40 that what I do for the poor is what I do to Jesus himself.

We owe this country for our lives, which were saved in Korean War by the sacrifice of U.S. and U.N. soldiers. We owe this country for our faith. We all are the products of U.S. Christian Mission to Korea and experienced salvation. We owe this country for all the blessings we received. We enjoy the most blessed life on earth. At this economic crisis, when more people fall into poverty and homelessness – 1.2 million jobs are already lost and 1 million homes are already foreclosed – this is the right time for us to share our blessings. Our thankfulness must produce action.

Our fourth point is that our gift for the poor as our gratefulness will return to the sender. Our internally mumbled thanks stay inside of us. But our externally expressed and acted out thanks will returns to the sender. Proverb 19:17 says, “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and will be repaid in full.”

In Isaiah 58:7-11, for those who feed the hungry and welcome the homeless: Your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer and he will say, here I am. The LORD will guide you continually, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a spring of water. Let us give thanks to God. All God's people say, AMEN.

19. Sermon for Emmanuel Pres. Church –Bothell, WA.

December 26, 2010.

Scripture Text: Matthew 2: 13-23

Sermon Theme: “From Nightmare to Hope”

Thank you for inviting me to worship with you this morning. I stand before you this morning as U.S. Mission product in Korea. I also stand as an immigrant who has been blessed abundantly in this country. This has motivated me to serve the Lord by serving homeless people. I retired two times; once from the Church of Mary Magdalene and then from General Assembly as a staff member for homeless issues. General Assembly put me on a speaking tour for 6 years to speak to congregations on the issue of homelessness. I still do. In the third round of recycling of myself, I helped develop Presbytery level homeless networks and Nest Mission in Washington State and still serve the homeless. I educate, raise consciousness and urge Korean immigrant community to share some of their blessings with the poor in our local community. My final retirement will come on the day of my final breath. God must have purpose of keeping me alive for 75 years and perhaps more. So I keep on serving. Thank God for that.

One day after the Christmas what do you preach on? Having no idea, I took the Scripture text from the Lectionary. Matthew 2: 13-23 is a well known story to all of us. But we are not excited to hear about the chilling story right after Christmas because it might ruin our happy Christmas spirit. But it is a story that exactly happened to baby Jesus right after his birth. So we are curious to know what exactly happened to Him? I titled my sermon theme "from nightmare to hope." I am going to make two major points:

My First Point is "nightmare." Most of us experienced a nightmare at one time or another in our life. When I was very young, when my father came home and beat up my mother, it was a nightmare. When I was 10, communist regime came in the North Korea and killed so many wealthy people, it was a nightmare. At age 11, fleeing from North Korea by night on foot and crossing the border risking our lives for freedom it was a nightmare. At 15, Korean War was a nightmare. The worst nightmare of all was finding my dying son in his room. These nightmares are so deeply rooted in my soul, I still live it and grieve.

When anyone of you had a baby boy or girl, did angel sing "glory in the highest and peace on earth," and magi came from far country with gifts and worship your baby? It didn't happen to me when I had a baby boy! But that's what exactly happened when Mary had a baby boy. What an extraordinary baby and what an exciting event that was? People around Mary and Joseph might have wondered "Who is this woman, and who is this baby born in a manger"? Jesus' story doesn't end there.

If you hear that soldiers are coming to kill your infant baby and you must leave the country immediately, what country would you flee to? Joseph and Mary heard from the angels that "*Herod, the mafia in those days, was searching for the child to kill, and they must leave the country immediately.*" As Joseph and Mary ran into an imminent, life-threatening nightmare, wasting no time, they picked up their baby and fled to Egypt.

Who was Herod ? In those days, Romans used vassal kings to govern their occupied countries like Judea. Herod was one of those vassal kings. Herod governed the Jewish nation for over 30 years through terror and brutality. Herod was known to be a tyrant, a madman and a murderer who killed several of his wives, children, other relatives including many teachers and religious leaders when he felt suspicious of threatening his power. He was known to be a half-Jew, a gentile, because he was the offspring of the Idumeans. His marginal status in the native Jewish community made him feel insecure. He was threatened by the infant Jesus, because he was called "future king of the Jew."

Herod also brought a nightmare to all other children in the land of Judea.

In order to destroy the newborn king, he decides to kill *all of the children in and around Bethlehem under age two.* According to Barclay, the commentator, the small population of Bethlehem would mean that between twenty to thirty children would have been executed. Including the border areas, the number must have been twice that. Matthew refers to Rachel who was weeping for her children quoting Jeremiah 31: 15. Rachel was the beloved wife of Jacob who died and was buried umpteen years ago. In the original setting of the Jeremiah text, Rachel is lamenting from her grave the tragic war and deportation of Israel people to Babylon. Matthew uses this Old Testament passage in a new

setting in Bethlehem where the everlasting weeping of mothers was heard throughout Bethlehem. Now Rachel is weeping over the loss of her later-day children who were slaughtered by Herod. Her cry from her grave was so loud that she was heard as far away as Ramah! If 60 children in the city of Bothell were massacred, wouldn't the whole city be turned into a nightmare? It will be even if 5 children are killed! The cry of the whole City of Bothell would be heard to the end of the earth.

Today, there are many Herods in our world who bring nightmares to people. Anybody, any system and any policy that causes a nightmare to humans can be the Herod. Many people in the world experience nightmare in man-made wars and natural disasters. Our worst nightmare was 9/11. When the Tsunami hit Japan it was yet the worst nightmare in human history not only to Japanese but to the whole world.

Many people experience nightmares when they are laid-off and evicted from homes. One homeless sisters experienced a nightmare when they were attacked and raped. Homeless people pitch tents in the park, and police come and destroy them. It is a nightmare. In such a cold winter having no place to sleep is a nightmare. Too many children are dying in the nightmare of war, starvation and homelessness. In our affluent life, computer, internet, cell phones and games, materialism, consumerism, self-centered, me-first, success oriented, competitive culture are slowly killing our children as one newspaper reported.

Many mothers who lose children by hunger lament so loudly that it would be heard across the ocean. Korean people say when we lose our children, we bury them in our heart, not in the grave. I experienced burying my son in my soul. Not only children but homeless adults are dying too. Their life span is only 48 years of age. Half of the homeless population are working poor. Homelessness is a nightmare.

My Second Point Is “Hope”

For Mary, Joseph and Baby, seeking asylum in Egypt was a nightmare as well as a hope. Children under age two died in the land of Judea in place of Jesus. But Jesus later died for all humanity. So they became hope for each other. God also guided them out of Egypt and brought them back home, which was a hope.

But Joseph didn't want to go to Judea because it was ruled by Archelaus. Who is Archelaus? At Herod's death, his kingdom was divided between three of his sons: Herod Antipas, Philip, and Archelaus. Judea was one of the areas that Archelaus ruled. He apparently inherited his father's violent tendencies. He began his rule with the slaughter of three thousand people. His brutality and dictatorial ways finally became so intolerable that he was removed and banished by Rome in A.D. 6 and exiled to Gaul. This explains why Joseph was afraid to go back to Judea. So he headed for Galilee instead. Although Galilee was also ruled by Herod Antipas, another son of Herod, the circumstance there was relatively less threatening. So Joseph and Mary settled in Nazareth which was in Galilee region. Jesus grew up in Nazareth. This is why Jesus was called "Nazarene."

Galilee region was economically poor and underprivileged. The ethnically pure Jews despised them as impure people because Galilee was semi-pagan with many mixed blood people. Matt. 11: 20-24, Jesus too compared Galilee to Sodom. Matt. 4: 16 reports Galileans were sitting in darkness and shadow of death.

That might have been the reason that later, in his adult life, Jesus chose this Galilee as his major mission site. In Matt. 4: 16 Jesus' appearance meant light of hope to Galileans.

Today, in the aftermath of the 2008 international economic crises, we are living in uncertain times with massive layoffs and mounting unemployment, companies and homes are closing, stock-market is in a turmoil, and with even more uncertain future.

In an article in *USA Today*, mental health experts said that the struggling economy is hurting many Americans' mental health: With Layoffs, job insecurity, college expenses, bills that cannot be paid, people experience anxiety, depression, sleep problems, and money-rooted marital conflicts." Even upper middle-class people are taking a hit to their well-being." People are more agitated, anxious, and angry. People experience a nightmare which makes them sick.

But we have a hope. As the Messiah was provided for an asylum even in the midst of violent nightmare. God will do the same for us. We must believe that God is in us and with us. We need to hear God's voice and do what God says as Joseph and Mary did whatever that may

involve. God might not just guide us to a hiding place. God might give us different task to perform. You and I must become hopes for others who experience a nightmare. You will bring hope to children whom you are going to tutor in the New Year. You bring hopes to the homeless you serve. Supported by Korean immigrant community, Nest Mission is trying to be hope to the homeless by offering rental assistance to those who are ready to move from shelters to apartment. We also offer dinner every Sunday evening in partnership with Maplewood Pres. Church. Last Christmas and this Christmas, we tried hard to bring Jesus' hope by offering 30 homeless people Christmas gifts of rooms for two nights at three motels.

Later, your tutoring could turn into after-school program for low income children.

Once I read a report that [Police officers say that the most dangerous time of day for kids is not late at night. It is from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. This can be a crime time, and a prime time to get them on the right path. Juvenile crime has been found to peak during the after school hours when many children are unsupervised. This is the case with many millions of children whose mothers are low wage earners who are trying to move from welfare to independent living. A study of the long-term impact of a good early childhood program for low-income children found that after 27 years, each \\$1.00 invested saved over \\$7.00 by increasing the likelihood that children would be literate, employed and enrolled in postsecondary education. It makes them less likely to be school dropouts, dependent on welfare, or arrested for criminal activity or delinquency.](#)

If you ever offer after school program, I would suggest to hug children a lot, give them many positive strokes saying "you are good person." If they grow up in love, hope and good self-image, [your after-school- programs will produce healthier and productive future citizens. It can also be a preventive of the future homelessness of our children.](#)

I would conclude by saying that we can find hope in God because God is with us in our nightmare and God initiates and directs all of our lives. At the same time, we must become a hope for others to free them from their nightmares as Jesus became the hope for all of us.

The story in our text today is an invitation for us to stand in solidarity with those who experience nightmares. When we do so, we confirm our solidarity with Jesus Christ. May God bless you.

20. Sermon at Madrona Presbyterian Church: May 15, 2011.

Scripture text: Ex. 3:7-10 Matt. 4: 23-24

Sermon theme: Is God out to lunch?

This sermon delivered to motivate the Madrona Church to open up her basement and make a shelter for homeless families with children.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for inviting me to worship God with you this morning. I preached here several times in the past. I am grateful to come back again. It is so good to see you again. I am the pastor emeritus of the Church of Mary Magdalene, which is a congregation of homeless women in downtown, Seattle. I founded and served this church for many years. After I retired from this ministry, Women's Ministries and the Hunger Program of the General Assembly hired me to go on a speaking tour to educate the whole church on homeless issues and present program ideas. I helped many churches to give birth to homeless mission. I have also seen several hundred homeless programs churches are engaged in.

Last few years, I and my colleagues have been challenging Korean immigrant community to share their blessings with the local homeless people. With their support we ended up creating Nest Mission. I also helped develop homeless task Network of Seattle Presbytery to encourage churches to engage in serving homeless people. We need a representation from your church.

I choose my sermon title "*Is God out to lunch*" from the scripture text of Exodus and Matthew we just read for you. What I am going to speak about this morning might be the preaching to the choir because you are all very familiar with homeless issue. Any of you have ever felt that God was out to lunch in your troubled times?

My first point is asking "Is God out to lunch?" A woman was attacked and raped in the night while sleeping in the park. In the

struggle to run away, she broke her ankle. There was no one to help her. She might have felt God was out to lunch.

A fragile homeless woman was knocked down on the 3rd Ave., in a bright daylight and being pushed into a car, taken somewhere and was raped for a few days. No one was there to help her. She might have felt that God was out to lunch.

An elderly woman was sleeping by a dumpster in the alley between the 2nd and 3rd Ave. She was run over by a garbage truck and lost both legs. She might have felt God was out to lunch.

Another woman was sexually abused by her clergy father for many years, This left her emotionally messed up for the rest of her life. She might have felt God was out to lunch.

A woman with several children slept in their car as her husband laid off from his work, and low income apartment didn't come up for a long time, she might have felt God is out to lunch.

In your King County, 2010 one night count showed 8,937 were homeless, of whom 55 percent are families with children. Too many people sleep in cars or outdoors these days. They might have been feeling God is out to lunch.

Mary's Place, which is a Day Program of Church of Mary Magdalene, sees many more homeless families with little children are pouring in every day. But they can't afford to keep them in motel rooms until section 8 comes up. In their homeless life with uncertainty, loss, and deprivation, children experience damage in their brain function, life skill, social skill and learning. Homelessness for women and children is a life-threatening trauma just like fire and tornado. Homelessness for women often means robbery, assault, rape and even murder. Therefore, I named the homelessness "the disease unto death."

Some of you might say, we have made it in our struggles, why can't they make it? People who have many problems are still housed when they have financial resources or families. People who are messed up too deeply can't make it on their own. They need help.

My second point is that God is NOT out to lunch: Exodus 3:7-10 witnesses that God observed, heard and knew the misery of Israel people in Egyptian bondage. And God came down to deliver them

from the oppressive Egyptians. God was actively working. God was NOT out to lunch.

Matthew 4: 23-24 witness that God in Jesus was busy walking on the Galilee streets, talking and eating with sinners, healing the sick, and saving the sin-sick, souls. God was busy. God was NOT out to lunch. The first century Christians witnesses that God was NOT out to lunch. They sold lands or houses, put the proceeds in a common pot and shared with the poor. Therefore, there was not a needy person among them. God was actively working in them. God was NOT out to lunch.

God suffers with those who suffer. God is hungry with those who are hungry. God is in pain with those who are hurting. God weeps with those who weep. God is working with us every minute healing our wounds. God is NOT out to lunch.

My third point is that God wants us to prove by our loving action that God is NOT out to lunch. God always looks for human partners. In our Exodus text, God did not work alone in liberating Israel. Through and with Moses, God ended Israel's homelessness in Egypt. In our Matthew Text, God in Jesus Christ was on Galilee streets saving people. In our story of Acts, God responded to the needs of people through first century Church. You too are called as God's partners to rescue homeless mothers and children. Mary's Place is desperately looking for a church that could open a room for homeless families.

What would you say, if Jesus asks you to sell all you have and give it to the poor just like the first century Christians did? You might say, Oh, Jesus, are you out of your mind? We are poor and have nothing to sell. What would you say, if Jesus asks you to invite the homeless into your homes as Matt. 25: 35 states? Would you say, "Oh my Lord, Jesus, you know we don't have any extra room. Or would you say, "We don't know them. We are scared of them. We can't have them in our house." What would you say, if Jesus asks you to open up your church facility for homeless families? Is that a better and doable option than selling your house or inviting the homeless into your home? Or would you say, Oh Lord, Jesus, we are hosting a meal program already. That's enough, Lord. What would you do if he cries out to you, "I am dying out here on the streets in homeless children? Are you going to walk away as if you heard nothing? Or are you going to open up your facility and invite him in? Or would you say, oh yes, we will open up

for Jesus but NOT for the homeless!! Do you remember Jesus said, what you have done for the homeless means you did it for him? Opening up or not open up your church is a matter of choosing to be a country club church or the Christ's Church. It is a matter of choosing to be a missional church or self-serving church. It is a matter of finding identity of your Church or lose Jesus all together.

My fourth point is about the missional church. Dr. John Buchanan, former moderator of Presbyterian Church (USA) writes, "Mission is why we are here and the church exists for the world." He quotes Theologian Emil Brunner saying. *"The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.* McNeal, the author of *the Present Future*, claims that *the North American churches suffer from severe mission amnesia. It has forgotten why it exists. The church was never intended to exist for itself. The North American church has lost its identity because it has lost its mission. Trouble is, the church is sleeping on the job. Modern day institutional church exists for the purpose of self-serving.*"

Wilbur Shenk, former professor of mission at Fuller Seminary, wrote, "The true test of religion is whether the people of God practice justice and live righteousness. This is measured by the way that the socially powerless – widow, orphan, and alien (the homeless) are treated.

As God chose Moses as a partner to go to Pharaoh to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, Jesus needs Madrona Church to be his partner to rescue homeless families from devastating homeless crisis. If you choose to become Jesus' partner, you prove that God is NOT out to lunch.

I bring you a mission idea: If your church decides to open up the space for homeless families and children, Mary's Place, which is day program of Church of Mary Magdalene, will become your partner. They will screen and send you homeless families and help recruit some volunteers. During the day time, families will go to Mary's Place to work out their problems. We can ask WHEEL Program to offer you consultation on how to set up and carry on. Seattle Presbytery's Homeless Network will help recruit 10 other churches in this area to be your partners who can help with volunteers, meals and needed resources. This will be a volunteer-run mission program by 10-12

churches together. It is doable and is being done at Lake Burien, Northminster Church in Seattle and in many other cities.

I have an awesome testimony to share with you: I befriended Deacon Park of the Nashville Korean Pres. Church in Tennessee when I led mission revival service there last month. Ever since, he and I were exchanging greeting through e-mails. I wrote to him that I will preach here this morning and that I will bring you a program idea to help homeless families with children, because we are getting more and more homeless in Seattle. He wrote me back sharing his early experience: *When he was young, his musician father died. His mother couldn't pay rent. One day they were evicted and she called all their relatives with no luck. As a young boy, he and his family spent the night outside.* So he understands the family crisis with no home. He added, "I mailed you \$3,000 check today, which you may use any way you see the need." I wept as I was reading his e-mail, knowing that God is not out to lunch and God is busy walking even ahead of us hearing the outcry of homeless families with children. I will suggest Korean Nest Mission to designate that money as seed money to provide a shower room, mats, room dividers, etc. when your church sets up a shelter for homeless families. [Temporarily that money is being deposited in its account for you because I didn't want to hold it]. All checks that come to me I turn over to the Nest Mission

No one decided to open a room for homeless families yet, but God has already started to work. God is walking much ahead of us by providing us with seed money. There is no coincidence for God. Mary Magdalene Church told me about the plight of the homeless families, I was asked to preach here this morning, and a check came from Nashville, all of these came together in a couple of weeks' time. There is no other way to interpret this except announcing it as "God's doing," Through you and me and Mr. Park, God seems to prove that God is in control. I don't know how you feel about this but it is an awesome spiritual experience for me that God is busy and not out to lunch.

It has been that way all along while I have been serving homeless people. If God is pleased with what I was envisioning, God always went ahead of me guiding my way with resources, so that I couldn't have any excuse to back off. I couldn't do anything but follow God's lead. When I was too slow God would pick me up and carry me on His back. I had no choice but doing what God wants me to do.

My concluding remark for you this morning is that we owe Jesus our lives. This is our turn to pay him back a little by becoming helping hands for Him who is suffering with the homeless out on the streets. When a poor church like Madrona which has little, shares with the needy, then we know that God walks with us and is NOT out to lunch.

God never wants to owe you anything. So God will pay you back fully for what you will do. Proverbs 19: 17 says, "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and will be repaid in full." In Luke 6:38, Jesus says, "give, and it will be given unto you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

May God set this church on fire for mission and growth. May God bless you abundantly for what you are just about to do. Are you ready to sing, "Here we are Lord, we have heard you calling in the night. Send us Lord, lead us Lord, to hold your homeless families in our hearts." Amen.

Note: After this service, the leaders of the church met and decided to renovate the church's basement and provide it as an emergency shelter for the homeless families with children. Praise the Lord! Ever since 2012, this renovated basement has been a home for homeless families.

21. **Advent sermon** Delivered at Bayview Retirement Community
(Dec 11, 2011)

Scripture texts: Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 1: 51-53; 4: 18-19

Sermon theme: What Messiah are you waiting for?

Thank you for inviting me for this evening's service. I have been here before to visit Jack and Barbara Wilson. Many years ago I preached here also. It is good to return. First of all, as a founder of the Church of Mary Magdalene, I would like to "thank you" for helping homeless women with Christmas shoes. The women appreciated them so much.

We are in the third week of Advent season. I am sure you have been hearing Advent sermons for the past two weeks. Some of you

may have delivered Advent sermons yourself for many years. I picked our Scripture texts from the lectionary.

This evening, I bring several guests with me. They are: Isaiah and Mary, the Mother of Jesus and homeless people. We will discuss what kind of Messiah they expected or are expecting. At last, I will invite Jesus in and will ask him if all three parties have the right or wrong image of Messiah. We will examine ourselves if we are waiting for the right kind of Messiah.

Firstly, Let us meet Isaiah as described in Isaiah 61: 1-3. God anoints a certain human agent with the Spirit to do Yahweh's deeply transformative work. This human agent is fundamentally committed to do God's will. Scholars assume this human agent is Isaiah himself. Some others assume he is Jesus. Some say, later, this leadership image was developed into a Messianic expectation.

Isaiah is a prophet who lived through the era of the Babylonian exile. Bishop Spong, one of the scholars of the Jesus Seminar describes Jew's Babylonian exile as follows: In 587 BC, Babylonia invaded Judah. The Temple, God's earthly dwelling place, was laid waste. Jerusalem, God's special city, was a pile of stones. The priesthood, their sacred customs, their creedal statements, were all lost. The entire Jewish population was transported to Babylonia. None of the Jews expected to see their homeland again, nor would they ever worship in their holy city again. The Jewish nation had come to an end (2Kings 24, 25). Their nation was no more. Israelites were once again aliens and homeless wanderers on the face of the earth. There was no hope to return. They were in exile.”

If you were in their shoes, what kind of leader, or Messiah would you wish for? Isaiah announces that God anointed and authorized God's agent to bring **good news** to the oppressed, to comfort the broken-hearted and all who mourn, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to release the prisoners and to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor. Those actions can be summarized as **good news** to those in captivity. The year of the Lord's favor refers to the Jubilee year. In a Jubilee year, debts were cancelled, the land sold for debts was returned to the original owner, slaves were freed and returned home, and the land and workers rest.

All of these actions are powerful ministries to the weak, the powerless, and the marginalized.

According to McAfee Brown, Isaiah 61:1-3 is a “reversal” for those who have been conditioned to expect bad news. God remembered them. Things are going to change. Israelites will come home. That is the leadership image Isaiah had in mind.

Secondly, let us meet Mary, the Mother of Jesus as recorded in Luke 1: 51-53. Commentator Larson said, these are the most revolutionary words ever spoken. Her statement about her unborn son could be a threat to Roman Empire and she could have easily been beheaded. Where did she get such courage? How did she become so brave? Let us ask where Mary was coming from.

In the first-century Palestine, 90% of population were poor peasants. On the fringe of the lower class were ‘unclean’ occupations such as leather tanning. At the bottom were peasants forced off their land, wandering vagabonds, beggars, and lepers. Heavy double taxation caused the poor to lose land, fall into day labor, slavery, prostitution, robbery and begging. Under their oppressive purity system women were unclean along with Gentiles and the poor. Under the oppressive patriarchy, women were non-persons and property of men. Under the oppressive religious practice, women were excluded from most parts of the temple activity. Abuse on young girls began at an early age and continued into adulthood. Uprising of the angry revolutionaries led them to cruel crucifixion on the cross. Mary, the young peasant girl, from an economically impoverished class, living in Nazareth, must have seen all and lived through this.

So, if you were in her shoes, what kind of Messiah would you expect and announce? She might have been a poor fragile young girl but became a strong brave mother at the moment when she was told she had conceived the Messiah. She found courage with God's support and announced what might have already been deep in her soul.

Let us hear how Eugene Peterson paraphrased her announcement: God took one good look at me, and look what happened. I am the most fortunate woman on earth! What God has done for me will never be forgotten. He bared his arm and showed his strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts. He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled

victims out of the mud. The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich were left out in the cold.

Commentators would say what God has done for Mary anticipates and models what God will do for the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed of the world. To speak of what God has done for Mary is to announce what God will do for all the poor; the powerful and rich will exchange places with the powerless and poor. God's choice of Mary is evidence of it.

So, would you say, is the Messiah whom Isaiah and Mary announced the same liberator of the poor and oppressed?

Thirdly, now, I will bring my homeless friends in. They will tell you that they are oppressed by poverty and homelessness. They are the broken-hearted, and mourn for the loss of jobs, homes and families. They are the captives of debts, unpaid tickets, fines, bad credit and substance addictions. They are often incarcerated in jails and prisons. They are hopeless having lost all their dreams and visions.

Service for them is not the priority for the State's budget setting. They are the first ones affected by the budget cuts. They need to be comforted, released, and set free from their captivities. They need to hear the announcement of the Jubilee. Therefore, they need to hear good news that will bring them up from the pits they are in.

What kind of Messiah these homeless friends would wait? Do you think these homeless people applaud the image of Messiah whom Isaiah and Mary are presenting? Yes, they certainly would.

I have been working with the homeless for the past several decades. My heart is broken when I see them sleeping in the cold wet streets and hear that their beds are soaked in their tents by the rain. I wear this purple shirt saying "End homelessness." In the Western Christian tradition, the color for Advent and Lent is purple which signifies repentance. I grieve and repent for having so many homeless people in this country. I have been wearing purple shirts and all my clothes are purple color for the past 13 years ever since the General Assembly of Presbyterian Church, USA, sent me out to whole church for 6 years to speak on the issue of homelessness. Homeless people and I are with Isaiah and Mary who announced liberator Messiah who will bring the poor and homeless *good news*.

Fourthly, now let us invite Jesus in and ask him if the Messiah whom Isaiah, Mary and the homeless are waiting for is the right Messiah according to Luke's report.

McAfee Brown answers that question saying, Isaiah's and Luke's versions are virtually identical. Jesus read Isaiah text for his inaugural sermon, it became his landmark text for his mission. It clearly tells us what he is up to.

Kraybill would say, "This is what the Messiah, the Anointed One, is all about." Using Isaiah 61:1-2, first, Jesus reveals *he* is the Messiah. Second, his role is to bring liberating news to the poor, the blind, the slaves, and the oppressed. Third, this is the proclamation of God's favorable year. Jesus' Jubilee emphasis means that Jesus' mission is "a visible socio-political-economic restructuring of relations among the people of God." Jubilee is bringing the outsiders inside so that they are back home for good. Jesus proved that he is the one about whom Isaiah was talking. Do you think that Jesus is on the same page with Isaiah and Mary? Yes, He seems to be.

My closing question is where does the Bay View congregation stand? Are you on the same page with Isaiah, Mary, the homeless and Jesus? Or are you waiting for a different Messiah? The kind of Messiah we believe in and are waiting for will determine our life here and after. May God bless you all. Amen.

22. Seek the Kingdom of God, not Anxiety

Edmonds Lutheran Church: Wednesday service November 21, 2012
Scripture Texts: Matt. 6: 25-26, 33 (Luke 12: 22-34)

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ³³But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

THEME: Seek first the Kingdom of God, not Anxiety

GREETINGS/ INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for inviting us to be part of this service. Thank you for being a partner with Nest Mission. We are happy to be

partner with you for our needy neighbors. In appreciation, a few of us came to be part of this worship service. I am taking your theme, "Seek the Kingdom of God, not Anxiety." I am going to make a few points.

My first point is that we all live in the time of anxiety. We live in the most self-centered, individualized and greedy world and times. Many are also working so hard to save and accumulate wealth. Many of us are competing so hard to go ahead of others and to be the first. To achieve so much, everyone is living in anxiety. People I serve live in anxiety to make their ends meet. The world we live in makes too many people sick with anxiety and depressive disorders.

My second point is that our text from Matthew 6 is well known saying of Jesus. Jesus seems to be speaking to both the rich and poor, because Jesus saw that the rich in his days were anxious to earn and accumulate wealth and ended up exploiting the poor. In Jesus' days there were too many poor. Jesus seems to assure the poor not to worry or to be anxious about what to eat and what to wear because God is on their side caring for them as God takes care of the birds in the air. Jesus' point could have been that such an anxiety of the rich and poor both for food and clothes reflects a lack of trust in God, a lack of interest in the kingdom. Therefore, Jesus appears to speak to the poor, "Like the birds, the poor did not sow or gather into barns but are being cared for." The anxiety of the rich also means a lack of generosity toward those in need. Jesus summons the wealthy who have no need to be concerned about daily needs, to identify with those who are needy, and to seek ways of understanding the heart of God for the poor.

My third point is reviewing what Jesus was NOT saying and what he WAS really saying? Jesus was NOT saying to the poor, "Do not worry about food and clothes, God will give them to you so that you don't need to work, relax, just rely on charity and everything will be given to you." Jesus was NOT saying to the wealthy, "Do not worry about the poor because God will take care of them. You just go on to take care of yourself and seek your own happiness."

My fourth point is that when Jesus was advising the rich and the poor not to be anxious, that was not end of his talk. He added, there is something we must do and act. That is, "First seek the kingdom and the righteousness of God." Yes, God can give us what we need. But

there is always something we must do and God must do. You know, God can give us strength and courage to work. But God wouldn't go to construction site to work for us. God wouldn't attend classes for us. We must do what we must do. There is something Jesus is asking us to do in place of anxiety. That is seeking the Kingdom of God instead of being worried and anxious about what to eat and what to wear and where to work. Kingdom of God is not just spiritual term but it is also a reality on earth.

What then will the Kingdom of God on earth look like? For me, it is a livable world where everyone deserves to work and meet their daily needs including a home. According to Luke 12: 33-34, the Kingdom comes when we sell our possessions, help the poor and make purses for ourselves that do not wear out, and save treasure in heaven. Some theologian said that what we own doesn't make us rich but what we give makes us rich. Life that gives more is a successful life. A life that doesn't give is a bankrupted life. Sharing some of our blessings with the poor will lead us to kingdom-making. That is what Jesus is trying to tell us. When we share, the poor can say "I am rich" and the weak can say, "I am strong." This might be the image of the Kingdom that Jesus had in mind.

I am a first generation immigrant to this country. I appreciated what this country has done for me. People who helped me to get settled in this foreign country were the image of God. Therefore, what God and people did for me motivated me to share my life with the poor. I have never worried about what to eat and what to wear and with what money do I serve the poor. I simply started a ministry on the street as a volunteer. I kept on loving homeless friends. I kept on caring for them. I kept on building the Kingdom of God. My Board began to pay me 25% first. Then, 50%, then 75% and finally 100%. I never asked how much they should pay me. God blessed me abundantly. All these 40 some years of my ministry life, I was never hungry, never naked, never been homeless.

My every day testimony is that when God is pleased with what I did God always provided. Therefore, it was matter of seeking God's will rather than being anxious about where is the money to do the work. Up to this date, I had never worried about that. In that sense I have been doing mission in a very un-Presbyterian way because I have done

it with no budget or no plan except kept on doing what God might be happy about. One day, a Korean pastor who closed his church came in with \$2,500. Another time a Korean elderly low-income woman called me to meet her at a bus stop with \$1,000.00. She saved it from the spending money her son gave her. One day when she read my article in Korean newspaper, she suddenly/urgently decided to give it for my mission. She said "If I don't give this to you TODAY, I would spend it." Mr. Hong, a Korean business man in San Diego, saw what we have been doing, was happy about it and sends us \$2,000 every month. I have many such testimonies. Don't look up the heaven to look for God there. God resides in the midst of these people. Those people are the image of the Kingdom. What they did is the mirror of what God would do for you. This means that when you set your mind right seeking the kingdom of God, God always provides through people who love to share their blessings

Therefore, anxiety is not our choice. Anxiety only makes us sick with fear, worry, paranoia, insomnia, poor appetite, and these can accompany depression. Severe depressive anxiety will require hospitalization in mental ward.

Since you are going to share your offering with us, some of you might wonder what the Nest Mission does. Pastor Julie included a little write up in your bulletin. I don't have time to repeat all of that. But I would share a few: Our mission is to seek God's Kingdom in our midst; to share God's compassion with our poor neighbors; to motivate the Korean immigrant community to share some of their blessings with local poor; to guide homeless people to holistic salvation by helping to meet their physical, emotional and spiritual needs; to work toward ending homelessness by helping to settle homeless people into apartments with the first month rent or deposit when one finds steady income. We offer Friday dinner. We offer the best Christmas gifts of motel rooms for 2-3 nights with gift packages and meals on Christmas Eve and two more nights; we try to find work for our people and take them to work including yard sale; your pastor and members helped us with this. We sing, pray and have a brief worship service before Friday dinner. We do crisis intervention as much as we can afford; when homeless people are sick on the streets or their tent is flooded we put them in motel rooms a few nights to a month. Our program has been served 100% by volunteers with no paid staff.

Your congregation has been striving for the Kingdom by offering our homeless people jobs. We thank you for that. Some who benefited from that work are here with us tonight. You are offering dinner every Wednesday evening. That is Kingdom making. Your church has been helping the poor in many different ways. That is Kingdom making. I heard this evening that you will share your offering with us. That is Kingdom making. Your partnership with the Nest Mission is Kingdom-making. If you keep on building Kingdom there is no time, no room for anxiety.

My concluding remark for us is that worry and anxiety are not our choice. We have no room for it in our lives. We must command our anxiety to leave us immediately. And we just keep on seeking God's will and keep on doing what pleases God. Anxiety can find no residence in us.

When the rich and poor leave all the worry in God's hands and do what is right, the rest will be obvious. Even when we don't deserve it, we are cared for. We don't need to be anxious about what to eat and what to wear. Our homeless friends experience this every day in this community. There is a dinner every evening at some church. And clothes are around. They didn't prepare it. But they are given free just as birds who neither sow nor reap, but God cares for them.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving. We thank God for compassionate people like you. Thank God for inviting us in Kingdom building. We thank God for abundant blessings poured out on us. We thank God for people like you for being a partner with us in serving the needy. Nest Mission thanks God for being able to serve our needy neighbors. We thank God for motivating the Korean immigrant community to serve the local poor. We thank God for all of you, for our cooking teams and for the volunteers who serve tirelessly and sacrificially.

We thank God for the perseverance of homeless brothers and sisters who _____ had never given up and survived despite the harsh treatment by their families, friends and society and even by the bitter weather.

We thank God for each other, friends and families, parents and our children. We thank God for giving us hope even in time of despair. We thank God for crying with us when we cry and rejoicing with us when we rejoice. We thank God for Jesus who resides in our midst as our savior and our friend. We thank God for loving us at all times and

in all places. We thank God for inviting us to be God's partner in building the Kingdom of God on earth. We thank God for freeing us from all fears and anxiety. All God's people say, Amen.

23. Delivered at Grace Presbyterian Church, Long Beach, CA.

April 14, 2013

Sermon Text: Is. 58: 3-12; Matt. 4: 12-17; 23-25

Sermon title: Jesus goes to Galilee

INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for inviting me to deliver your message this morning. I feel at home here, because you are a very inclusive church and because Pastor Marion, my friend is serving this church. I also feel at home because you and I share common interest in serving homeless people.

My sermon theme is "Jesus goes to Galilee." Since our text is a very familiar one to us, I might be preaching to the choir. If so, let us take it as a friendly reminder. Just as many of you confess, I too take Jesus as my spiritual Lord and savior. But I am very interested in knowing Jesus of history, who lived on earth just like you and me. Therefore, this morning, we will meet THAT Jesus. I will make several points:

Firstly, let us reflect upon the Matthew text: The fact that Jesus decided to do his mission at the time of *John's arrest*, and chose Galilee for **his mission** site makes us suppose who he wanted to be. John's arrest and death reveal the political climate of Jesus' days. If anyone was critical of the Roman Empire or the emperor, that person was instantly arrested and put to death. That is what exactly happened to John.

John's arrest seemed to be the momentum or motif for Jesus to start his ministry. At that time Galilee was the land of Gentiles. *Gentiles* in those days were all non-Jews. Galileans were despised and hated as sinners by all the Jews because racially they were mixed, religiously they were diverse, ethically they lived free life-style, and economically they were poor: There were many peasants, day laborers, slaves, prostitutes, widows and orphans, beggars, sick, crippled, and the hungry on the streets of Galilee; they were marginalized, humiliated, and oppressed and never been paid full wages. They often had to accept slavery and

prostitution to support themselves. So, Galilee was called " *a land of Gentiles who sat in darkness and shadow of death*. In our contemporary term, they are the homeless you and I are serving. In our world where the homeless are this is Galilee. Our Galileans experience all of the above that Palestine Galileans experienced.

Jesus went to that particular Galilee. There he touches the untouchables and healed them. He was a street minister and Doctor for the homeless in Galilee. Why did he go to that Galilee? Perhaps it was because he identified with the poor there. Don't we remember Matt. 8:20 where he is reported to say," Foxes have holes and birds in the air have nests but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head?" He was one with the poor day laborer.

Galilee had a special meaning for Jesus. In Galilee, Jesus started his ministry. In Galilee, the discipleship journey had begun. In Galilee, they struggled to understand Jesus. There they were first commissioned to go out as missionaries. There they faced Jesus' rebukes when they understood so little. He met the disciples again in Galilee after his resurrection. All the disciples returned to Galilee to meet the risen Jesus. The post-resurrection meeting with Jesus in Galilee is renewal of relationship between unfaithful disciples and Jesus (Mark 14:28), to learn again from him, to be sent out again, and to head for Jerusalem and for persecution again.

Jesus loved the poor Galileans because, for Jesus, they were the sign of his kingdom. This Jesus inspired me early in my teen-years up to this day, and made me who I am today.

Secondly, let us reflect upon the Isaiah text: According to commentators, In Isaiah 58: 1-3, God is lamenting that people worship and fast to gain advantage of some sort. The verdict is that such calculated worship gives NO access to God. Thus, the true worship and fast requires us to *lose the bonds of injustice, to break every yoke, to let the oppressed go free, to share our bread with the hungry, and to bring the homeless poor into our house; and to cover the naked.*

The term "yoke" refers to indebtedness placed on the poor. In Palestine, the poor couldn't pay the taxes that was imposed on them by Rome. They borrowed money to pay. But they couldn't pay the debt. Debts were piling up. They ended up selling their lands to pay their taxes. When they became homeless, they became slaves for the land owners. It's like many our homeless friends who used to work, lost

jobs and couldn't pay rent. They didn't have anything, such as land to sell to pay rent. They ended up on the streets.

To "undo" and "let go free" refers to cancelling paralyzing debts. Therefore, **fasting** must include sharing bread, houses, and clothes. This was exactly what Jesus was doing on the streets of Galilee. Isaiah 58 warns against selfishness, greed, indifference, and exploitation of the poor. It also challenges our *individualism* and *privatization* that denies our obligation to the poor. It demands us to do justice for the poor. According Old Testament Scholar, Brueggemann, the way the Bible thinks about *justice is to sort out what belongs to whom, and return it to them*. We control what belongs to others so long that we are under the illusion that we own everything. So the work of liberation, redemption, and salvation, is *giving things back*.

Thirdly, Jesus invites us to our own Galilee. You serve the homeless with meals and let them taste Jesus' love and care. You also support a homeless mission financially. You open a shed on your church premise to take in donations for them. Your youth also serve the homeless one Sunday a month with meal and worship. In meal sharing and worship the homeless experience the Kingdom on earth. You are doing a great job as hands and feet of Jesus. If every church does what you do, we can end homelessness. You are helping our contemporary Galileans.

I have a testimony to share: Up to age 10, I was raised in a wealthy home in North Korea. When I was 11 - when WW II ended, my family escaped from the Communist regime to South Korea. In our refugee life there, we experienced hunger and housing problems. During the Korean war everything we owned was bombed and we lived in a shed for 3 years. In that war, I lost my brother, leaving a wife and 2 and 4 years old boys behind. We turned into a pain-stricken family. A few years after we immigrated to the U.S. I lost my 17 year old son and became an ever-grieving, guilt-ridden mother. My pain was so severe that I felt a bomb shell being stuck in my heart. I asked God to take my life away. God wouldn't do it. I pushed and pushed God away until I was totally exhausted and surrendered. In such despair, I experienced Jesus who was crying with me sharing my anguish. I am a U.S. Christian Mission product from Korea. I am one of a million lives saved in Korean War by the sacrifice of U.S. Soldiers.

I was welcomed into this country. We put roots down and raised a family. I feel deeply indebted to the abundant blessings I received in this country. God transformed all of the above into my vocation of serving the homeless. So, for the past 4 decades, homeless mission has been my home. I have been involved with homeless mission locally and nationally. At one point, the General Assembly put me on a speaking tour for 7 years to educate the whole church on the issue of homelessness and motivate them to engage with homeless mission. I carried GA overture, "Every Church open one room to welcome the homeless," and "all Presbyterians wear purple shirts that has "End Homelessness" printed on. In fact, many Presbyterian Churches opened rooms and welcomed the homeless and many members were wearing the purple shirts. I have been wearing this purple shirt day and night for the past 15 years.

I chose color purple when I developed this shirt. As we lament, grieve and repent for Jesus' suffering on the cross and commit to serve him, we must do the same for the many homeless in this country. We must share their pain and commit to serve them.

I had founded several homeless mission programs, two in Seattle alone. One was a homeless Women's Church called "the Church of Mary Magdalene." The other is Nest Mission in North Seattle area. We urge Korean immigrant community in Washington State to share their abundant blessings with the local poor. Therefore, Nest Mission is supported entirely by Korean immigrant community. We share a variety of services with local poor and the homeless.

Just to mention a few, we give rental assistance to the homeless who are ready to move into housing. Every Friday evening, we worship with the homeless. We have a homeless choir that makes a joyful noise to God. We do crisis intervention, we help find work. We also offer Bible study. We give Christmas gift of motel rooms for three nights to celebrate Jesus' birth, who was born homeless in a manger. We offer many more services.

I admire what you are doing. Your involvement with the homeless means that you are standing in solidarity with Jesus in Galilee. Jesus promised to bless you for your work in Galilee. Let us end my sermon by reading Isaiah's text.

Let us read it together.

If you lose the bonds of injustice, undo the thongs of the yoke, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke, share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, cover them,¹⁰ and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard.⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.¹¹ The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail (Isaiah 58: 6- 11). Amen.*

Part Two: Sermon to homeless people

The followings are brief sermons I delivered at the homeless church. They are rather simple and not in depth because we need to preach a short sermon due to time constraint before our dinner for the homeless. However, in the process of preparing my sermon, at times it ended up using difficult terms that some may not understand exact meaning. In that case, I used to break it down in easier language and made them simpler. But here I present my original scripts as they have been prepared in the first place. Those who want to use them for the same population may do the same as I did. I just tried to communicate some core ideas on each Scripture text and theme. Although they are relating to the homeless situation, they can also be preached for the public with some modification. I dare hope that these brief sermons might become some reference to those who serve homeless people, need to preach to them as well as to the public.

1. Advent Sermon

Scripture text comes from Luke 3:4-8. Anyone would like to read it?

The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." ⁵ Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; ⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." ⁷ You brood of vipers! ⁸ Bear fruits worthy of repentance.

Sermon theme: "Let us repair the road."

We are in Advent season which started last Sunday and will last until Christmas. Advent means "waiting." It is the period of preparing to welcome Jesus.

Today's Bible verses tell us about an announcement of Jesus' coming. During the 400 years before Jesus' birth, Israel didn't have prophets. The people longed to have them because they were the conscience of old days for Israel's religious and social ills.

Here John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness and announced Jesus'

coming saying, Jesus was much greater than John himself. John is presenting ideas how to welcome Jesus.

First, John is asking people to prepare Jesus' way by making *every valley filled, and every mountain and hill made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth.*

This is exactly what people did – repaired the road condition when King came so that King didn't have to travel up and down the hill and mountain on a rough road.

How can we relate the road condition – valley, hill, mountain, crook, and rough in the text to our life today? Can we say that many of you have been in deep valley of despair in losing jobs, homes and health. The stress and struggle to survive in your homeless life has been as high as hills and mountains. Your thinking and mind became bent and crooked from the rage and hostility in your painful homeless life. And the whole homeless life journey has been rough and tough for you.

John is urging us to repair the road to welcome the King. John's idea of fixing the rough crooked road condition is our repentance. Repentance means complete turnaround from where we are. That also means change our old wicked ways and experience forgiveness. It is just like when I expected very important guests from Korea last August, I cleaned the whole house, changed sheets, got new towels and got ready with all necessary things including food.

How we can relate this message to our heart by saying, we must smooth out our deep valley of our life, rough road we have been walking physically, emotionally and spiritually. What will be your valley, rough ways and crooked side of life that call for "repentance." I wish there is a simple way of washing all of the negative things out of body and mind using detergent and disinfectant.

John calls this cleansing activity "repentance." In order to prepare to receive Jesus, we have to experience some change in our life. To change we have to know what to change and how to change. Anybody would like to share your way of doing it? Yes, some of you might change some of your old bad habits of drinking by getting some help because it will be hard to do it alone. That way we can clean the room in our hearts. Let us repair our road condition by changing our old way of thinking negatively so that Jesus can come into our lives. Let us pray.

2. **Christmas sermon:**

Scripture Text: Luke 2:1-11

Sermon theme: Christmas: Meeting homeless baby Jesus

As we know Christmas is so commercialized and a family event that it is a very difficult time for many of you, because few people will give you Christmas gifts and very few of you have your family ties that you can join them at this family season. As our theme this year (2011) is "Let us meet Jesus," today's particular theme is meeting homeless baby Jesus. It might be a depressing theme in this joyful season. But I think you will like this Jesus I am introducing to you today. This baby Jesus is different from other babies:

Firstly, he was born homeless: Let us read the Bible story together from Luke 2:1-7:

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

To summarize the story, Mary was in full pregnancy. The Roman Emperor ordered people to go to their ancestor's town to register. Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem with Mary which was Joseph's ancestor's town. While they were there, the time came for Mary to deliver her child. But there was no place she could deliver the baby. Finally baby was born in an animal barn and was laid in a manger, an animal feeding box, because there was no room for them in the inn. Perhaps there were too many people who came to register and the town was crowded. But Joseph and Mary were poor and couldn't afford any better housing either. Joseph was carpenter and a day-laborer just as some of you are. He didn't make much. When rich people brought offerings of lambs and goats for the church, Mary could bring only a little dove. This means she was poor. So baby Jesus was born in a manger, born homeless. This means that he started his life poor and homeless from the day one.

What does this mean to all of us? Very few of us are born outdoor in this day and age. But some of you might have been born in poor and broken homes. Some of you might have been born with no father's presence. Some of you might have been taken away as soon as you were born to be adopted out. Some of you might have lost mother as soon as you came to this world because she left you. Many of you also can relate to that situation: You lost your own room. When you call many shelters there was no room and you call churches and there was no answer, how devastating it is! That's exactly what happened to Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. Those of you who experienced all these can identify with homeless baby Jesus. Do you like this Jesus now because he was in your shoes, and knows your situation?

Let me share my experience: I was born in a broken home. In those days, my father ran off with another woman. My mother was sad. The baby, me, must have been sad too. Before I was born, I might have pounded her womb crying out "why are you bearing another woman when you yourself are abused?" From day one, my life has been very tough. Therefore, personally, I feel that Jesus knows my troubles and pains. This truth has comforted me. For this reason, Jesus loves me and I love Jesus. This is the reason I love you, the poor and homeless because I have been there too. This motivates me to introduce this special Jesus to you who knows your situation from day one.

This Bible story helps us to identify with Jesus' troubled infancy. This story helps people who experienced early trauma to find hope in him. Early trauma affected all of us and many of us are damaged by it. Our early trauma has driven some of us to substance abuse and others to mental illness. I am not saying that our early trauma must dwell on us but to understand where we came from so that we can understand the little child in us. Without knowing who we are and where we come from, we can't be healed. It's like no Doctor can treat their patients without knowing the cause of troubles.

Secondly, baby Jesus was born among poor friends and for the poor: Let us read the Bible stories in Luke 2: 8-11 and Luke 1: 52-53 together;

2: 8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

^{1: 52} He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

But Angels who brought big news didn't announce it to the emperor or governor through King 5 TV station or in the New York Times. They told this news to shepherds in the field. In those days, shepherds were poor, marginalized, and despised lower-class outsiders. So Jesus' best friends from his first day on were the poor and marginalized.

In Luke 1:52 and 53, Jesus' mother, Mary is talking. She knew what kind of man this baby would grow up to be. She perceived him to be a person for the poor, who would bring down the rich and powerful from their thrones and send them away empty, but lift up the poor lowly and fill the hungry with good physical, emotional, social and spiritual food. She was envisioning a fair world where the rich wouldn't exploit the poor and throw them into poverty and homelessness.

Not only has Jesus been in our shoes, he understands us. He suffers with us and in us because he resides with us and in us. When we cry he cries. When our hearts ache his heart aches.

Thirdly, this baby was born as a savior: Let us read the bible verses together: Luke 2: 11: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

He came to save us; to bring us salvation. What is the meaning of salvation?

Many people will relate salvation only to spiritual sphere of life or something we will experience after death.

But according to theologian, Marcus Borg, the word "salvation" comes from the same root as "salve," a healing ointment. Salvation thus has to do with healing the wounds of existence. Wounds of existence are many and deep. Some of these wounds are inflicted on us, some are the result of our own doing, and some we inflict on others. Liberation from bondage is thus one of the central meanings of salvation. Liberation from physical, political, economic, emotional, social and spiritual poverty, homelessness, illness, afflictions, bondage and sins can be called salvation. I call this holistic salvation. Bible says, the purpose of Jesus birth was to bring us such salvation. So his birth

is very different and unique. This homeless baby was born with a big purpose.

How is Jesus going to do this? I will do this by coming into our midst to live with us. His birth meant that God came down, took residence in our midst, to live with us and to save all people including you and me.

Fourthly, this baby Jesus was born as good news to us: Let us read the bible verses together; Luke 2: 10: ¹⁰But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people:

Liberation from all forms of bondage to sin, poverty and homelessness is surely good news. I wrote in my Christmas card about the Christmas as follows: *This is the time we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ who came to reside in our midst as the light in a dark world, as compassion in an apathetic world, as justice in an unfair world, to empty his entire self for the greedy world, to love the world that is full of hatred, to be a hope to the hopeless, to heal the sick, and to save sin-sick souls in exchange of his own life.* These are good news to us all. This is the meaning of Christmas and the very reason why we celebrate the birth of Jesus today.

3. Meeting refugee baby Jesus

Scripture Text: Matt. 2: 13-15

Last week we met homeless baby Jesus who was born in a manger because there was no room in the inn. Today we are going to meet a refugee Jesus, who fled to a foreign country because his own king was seeking to kill him. Let us read the Bible verses together: Matt. 2:13-15:

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ ¹⁴Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod.

Anybody remember why the King Herod was going to kill Jesus? Yes, because the King Herod heard that this little Jesus was born to be the King of the Jews.

In those days, Herod was a vassal king under the Roman occupation. He was known to be a tyrant, a madman and a murderer

who had killed several of his wives, his own children, other relatives including many teachers and religious leaders when he felt suspicious of their threatening his power. When he couldn't find the baby Jesus in the little manger, he decided to kill *all of the children in and around Bethlehem under age 2*. These children didn't even have a chance to flee. They were all killed before they could escape.. So the land was filled with mother's laments.

God's angle let Joseph and Mary know what was going on and urged them to flee with baby Jesus. So they fled to Egypt, which means they became refugees in a foreign country.

Any of you came to this country as a refugee? Refugees are those who fled their country escaping wars or some kind of life-threatening persecution. There are many people in this country who do not have legal refugee status. Refugees get some help but illegal immigrants get no help. When you are illegal immigrants, homeless and sick, you might feel like you are at the end of the rope. Here, we don't ask about your legal status. We welcome and love everyone as Jesus would.

Today, there are many Herods in our world. Any leader, any political party, any system, and any policy that causes a displacement of people can be the Herod. Many people in the world experience displacement in man-made wars, natural disasters and poverty. Many of you were born in the U.S., and not as refugees. But when you are evicted from your parental home or rented apartment into the cold streets, you become refugees in your own city. When you are evicted from jobs and have no money for rent or food it could have been like a refugee life. People pitch tents, police come and destroy them, you are displaced again and suddenly you become like a refugee. When people are locked up in mental hospitals or prisons for a long time, you are displaced. I want to call these displaced life circumstances "a refugee life." It is very sad that many people become refugees in their own cities and don't get the same housing privilege as legal refugees receive.

In 1946, at age 11, before many of you weren't even born, I became a refugee with my family from North to South Korea fleeing from the threat of the Communist regime. In 1950, we were again refugees in an unfamiliar city and town during the Korean War fleeing from the bombing and killing war zone. We lost everything we owned except the clothes on our back and a few bags just like some of you are

carrying. We experienced hunger and homelessness. This is the reason why I understand people in a refugee situation so well. That is the reason why many other Koreans have joined me in helping the poor in this country. **We had been in your shoes.**

It was bad enough for Jesus to be born homeless, and this time in his infancy he was forced to be displaced in a refugee life in a foreign land. For Mary, Joseph and Baby, seeking asylum in Egypt was a nightmare as well as a hope. It was bad news to be a refugee for Jesus but God provided him a refuge in Egypt. This was a hope from the displacement. God was involved in every aspect of their life. God was with them and in them. Therefore, Jesus has compassion toward all those who lost their homes and were displaced into a refugee life. Do you like this Jesus who had been in your shoes? Does this story help you to find hope in Jesus?

I have been talking with some of you individually over our meal listening to your past sad stories. I get to know you whole lot better and am building amazing relationship with you. I learned that some of you come from early trauma and later messed up your life with substance abuse. The best news I have been hearing is that some of you are trying to get up and walk by enrolling in colleges to start anew or finish up unfinished courses. Yes, that's wonderful! Let us try to overcome our early traumas. Your parents might have messed you up. But when you grow up to be adults, you have to do recovery job for yourself. This year, you cannot stay where you were last year. You have to move forward. The refugee Jesus will walk with you, and we will walk with you. When refugee Jesus understands you and accepts you as a wonderful person, can you feel better about yourself? Can you help Jesus lift you out of the dumps you have been in? Several volunteers of the Nest Mission also came from past traumas, came to this country with empty hands and we have made it.

My conclusion is that we have a hope. As Jesus was provided for an asylum even in the midst of violent nightmare, God will do the same for you. We hope the Nest Mission and Maplewood Church can be your refuge. Although we can't offer physical refuge, we want to offer you spiritual and emotional refuge by being your friends and supporters. Jesus is in us and with us. He is walking with us in every step we are moving because he loves us. I hope you meet this refugee Jesus today and welcome him into your life that you may experience

much different and better life this year. We will work together for that hope. Amen.

4. **Meeting Galilean Jesus**

Scripture Text: Matthew 2: 19-23;

My scriptural text comes from Matthew 2:19-23 and my sermon theme is meeting Galilean Jesus. Let us read the Bible verses together from Matthew:

19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ²⁰'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.'²¹ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. ²³There he made his home in a town called Nazareth.

Let us make a few points:

Firstly, we remember that the infant Jesus and his family became refugees in Egypt. Angel appeared again to bring a good news that Jesus' family can go back home now. But Joseph was afraid to go back to the land of Judea because Archelaus, the son of tyrant Herod was ruling. Archelaus apparently inherited his father's violent tendencies. He began his rule with the slaughter of three thousand people. So Mary and Joseph went to Galilee instead and settled in a small town called Nazareth in Galilee region. Although Galilee was also ruled by Herod Antipas, a son of Herod, the circumstance there was relatively less threatening. So Joseph and Mary settled with Jesus in Nazareth. So, Jesus grew up in Nazareth. This is why Jesus was called "Nazarene." Can you imagine that they had to come back to the region that was ruled by the same tyrant Herod family from whom they ran to Egypt? What an unsafe and frightening circumstance!

Secondly, why was Galilee so important in Jesus' life? What Galilee could have meant for him? Nazareth was a little town in Galilee District just as Edmonds is a little city of Snohomish County. Galilee region had a diverse population who were racially mixed people, called

"Gentiles." Galileans felt contempt from the Jews as Jewish people despised any non-Jew as unclean and ungodly people. Most Galileans were peasants and poor. Farming in Galilee was rapidly becoming commercialized just like our Marysville is rapidly turned from farms into a city. So, in Galilee, small farms were being replaced by large estates. Many people were dislocated just like gentrification in our time. Galileans were underprivileged and lacked the opportunity for education and many other things. Jesus too was a peasant in Galilee. He was also a day laborer. He was a *teketon* (carpenter) and perhaps he was employed in the construction work just as some of you have been. He owned no land of his own. Peasant and day laborer describe his social class. This means that he was at the bottom of society. Therefore, when God came to the world in Jesus Christ, God came to the poor, most despised and lowest place. Does this help you feel better by identifying with this Jesus?

Thirdly, God had a purpose in placing Jesus in Galilee. Jesus came to Galilee as a Galilean to identify with the poor and marginalized and to live in their midst and share their suffering to save them. Thus other Galileans can identify with Jesus and find hope in him. In a way, where you are is in Galilee. Your displaced, poor, unemployed and homeless life can be called Galilee. Therefore, you have been Galileans. I had been in Galilee too.

Here is a story of a homeless man whom I met in Seattle downtown: He used to make a 5 digit salary. He injured his back on the job. He was taking prescription drugs for his pain. He got addicted to that drug. His addiction made him lose all of his savings, possessions including his house and his job. He ended up eating out of trash bin and sleeping on the streets. He went down all the way to the bottom pit of his life. He was a Galilean in Galilee. He confessed that one day God told him that he can't stay down there any longer. He too wanted to get out of this Galilee. He came to transitional housing of the First Presbyterian Church. While he was a resident there, he stopped taking drugs and became a shelter leader. When I met him, he was going to college. Nest Mission helped him with tuition one time. In the evening he works for another shelter as staff member. Not only did he get out of Galilee, he is now using his Galilean experience to serve the most needy.

My last concluding question for you is: Do you want to meet this Galilean Jesus today? Does he identify with your Galilean experience? Do you identify with HIS Galilean experience? Do you find HOPE in him? Are you ready to get out of your Galilee? How are you going to USE your Galilean experience? Like Jesus and the homeless man you might want to go back to Galilee later to serve the most needy friends there. May God bless you and walk with you. Amen.

5. Meeting Jesus, the street minister

Scripture text: Matthew 4:12, 15-17, 23-24

Theme: The street minister

Does anyone remember what kind of Jesus we met the last few weeks? Yes, we talked about Homeless Baby Jesus, Refugee Jesus and Galilean Jesus. Today we will talk about a different Jesus. I want you to figure out what kind of Jesus this is while we read the bible verses. Please look at the screen and read out loud together: Matthew 4:12, 15-17, 23-24

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee... Galilee of the Gentiles—¹⁶ the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.' ...²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.²⁴ So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them.

Firstly, where were Galilee people sitting? They sat in darkness and in a shadow of death. What could that mean? Anyone has any idea? Yes, it could mean poverty, unemployment, eviction, homeless life, sickness, etc. It could also mean addiction to substances or mental illness, prostitution and many other things. Has anyone been sitting in darkness and a shadow of death but being cured? Is there anyone who would like to share such an experience?

Secondly, when Jesus came to the world as the God's son, he didn't come to a Governor's or presidential mansion. He came to sick, poor, despised, and underprivileged outsiders. He came to homeless people first. What was happening to them on the street while Jesus was with them? Anyone remembers? Yes, that's right. People were cured from

all kinds of sickness, pains, diseases, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics.

What do you call this man who did that? Street evangelist. Street healer. Street preacher. Yes, I call him *the street minister and street Doctor*. He didn't have any office to practice his profession. He did all that on the streets where the homeless people were.

Thirdly, what was happening to people when they were cured? Anyone can guess? Would you think that the cured people were finding joy, hope and high self-esteem? Because finally someone cared about them, respected and treated them like human beings. Yes, some change must have taken place too. What kind of change would you expect? When we are cured *physically*, what do you experience *emotionally*? We feel better and feel good. *Spiritually*, what could happen to you? We will come closer to God. What does that mean for you? When you come close to God what happens to you? Yes, you get to tell God who you are, about your past life, etc. We can call it "repentance". Jesus said, "I am here and you repent!" Repentance means complete turn-around from our old life style. It could mean change in our thinking, feeling and behavior. Could it also mean sobriety from alcohol and clean from drugs? Yes.

Lastly, my question for you today is "What must happen here in our gathering"? What is your hope and wish ? What must the Nest Mission do? What you can do? How can we work together to bring your hope and wish to reality? My suggestion is that we meet this Jesus TODAY, who is already in our midst. Do you want to meet this Jesus, the street minister who deeply cares about us? We can work with him to get us out of all of our afflictions and bondages. So I want you to be part of this mission and not mere dinner guests. Jesus needs you to help yourself. Nest Mission needs your help to help you. None of us can do it alone. We are a team that must work together to bring healing and restoration to our lives. We can call it "Salvation." Now turn to the person sitting next to you. Ask what is his/her prayer concern. Pray for that friend's concern or problem. Do it for each other. And I will end with my prayer. Thank you.

6. Meeting Jesus who is the Good News

Scripture Text: Luke 4: 18-19

Theme: Jesus, the good News

We have been talking about Jesus the past few weeks. This evening, we are going to meet Jesus again. When you read the Bible verses try to name this Jesus. OK? Now, Let us read out loud Luke 4:18-19 on the screen: Luke 4:18-19:

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'

How would you name this Jesus? I named him "Jesus, the Good News. This passage is known to be Jesus' inauguration speech or his first sermon. When a President gives his inauguration speech, everyone's eyes are glued to the TV and they listen carefully. Why? Because it is his first and the foremost important speech that will give us some idea who he is, what he is up to, what his political agenda is and how he is going to lead the country, etc. In the same way, in this passage, Jesus tells us what he is up to and who he is. He introduces himself as the anointed one, which means he is God's Messiah. He doesn't say literally in this text but implies that "He himself is the Good News." Most of us believe that he came to save the world, which is good news for the world.

He visited Nazareth in Galilee region where he grew up. He spoke in a worship service at the temple just like I am preaching here right now. There His major message was that he was sent to bring good news to the poor, to the captives, to the blind and to the oppressed.

Why was what he said good news to the poor? Because 90% Galilean citizens were poor because they were exploited under the Romans. Many were enslaved by poverty. Their debts were mounting because they kept borrowing money to pay taxes to Roman government and to their own government. Many lost their farm land when they couldn't keep up with tax and debts. Many fell into day labor just as many of you lost jobs these days and fell into day labor. Many ended up begging on the streets just as some homeless persons today stand on the street with a sign saying, "I need help, I need a job." Many were sold into slavery for their debts. Most of them couldn't see any hope or future and lived like the blind. When they protested against such oppression, they were crucified or imprisoned. I bet many of you can relate to such life circumstances, right? Release of the oppressed, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to the captives were

certainly good news to poor Galileans who were sitting in the shadow of death.

Why is it good news to the poor? Jesus was referring to the year of the Lord, which is *Jubilee year*. All Galileans knew exactly what that meant. Jubilee meant that every 50th year, the overused and exploited land took a rest for a year; peasants forced to sell their land for debts would get it back; those sold into slavery because of debts could now come home. All of their past debts were cancelled.

The spirit of jubilee comes from their slavery experience in Egyptian bondage. Exodus 23:9 says, "*You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*"

What if the U.S. government ever announced jubilee law so that the housing and the job you lost came back to you? You wouldn't need to sleep in your car, on the streets or in the park. Your credit card debts would be cancelled. All your traffic tickets and many other kinds of citations would all be cancelled, and police officers would not be on your back any longer. You wouldn't need to go to free dinner any more. When you hear such announcement wouldn't that be **good news** to you. You might shout for joy on top of your lungs, and dance and have a party. So can you understand Jesus' announcement as **good news** to the poor?

What will be good news for you today? When I say to you, "I am taking you out to dinner," isn't that a small good news for you? When I announce that we will offer Christmas gift of motel rooms for 3 nights. Isn't that good news for you? If someone calls and asks me to send a few people to work that is good news for me because I know it is good news for you. When I said, "*Government is offering free cell phones. Come and apply for it.*" Wasn't that good news? When you get a phone call for a job offer on your new phone, isn't that good news? When Linda heard that her senior apartment is ready for her to move in, that was the best news we have been waiting for. When a cancer patient hears that he/she is cancer-free, isn't that good news? When I took off 30lb it was good news for me because it lowered my cholesterol. When you tell us that you are clean and sober that's good news for us and for Jesus as well.

What will it take to bring Jesus' good news to our reality? Remember that we are his partners? He needs us to bring his good

news to our reality. He is giving us all the hopes, encouragement, strength and love that we may get out of our captivity in poverty, captivity of addictions, captivity of illness and captivity of hopelessness, captivity of despair, captivity of blindness and captivity of homelessness. But he needs our partnership. If you are lying under the cherry tree hoping cherries fall into your mouth that will never happen. God raised cherries and you must go to cherry tree and pick them yourself.

My concluding remark is that Jesus is the *good news* for us. Accepting this good news is an invitation to eternal life. All you need to do is meet him and walk into his presence. If it takes prayer to experience his good news, let us do it. If it takes sobriety, let us do it. If it takes giving up dope, let us do it. If it takes getting up early, let us do it. If it takes our patience, let us nurture it.

Elder Young Hee Kim sent me the following e-mail. It might be appropriate for what I am saying here:

I asked God to take away my habit. God said, No. It is not for me to take away, but for you to give it up. I asked God to grant me patience. God said, No. Patience is a byproduct of tribulations; it isn't granted, it is learned.

I asked God to give me happiness. God said, “No,” I give you blessings; Happiness is up to you. I asked God to spare me pain. God said, “No.” Suffering draws you apart from worldly cares and brings you closer to me. I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life. God said, “No.” I will give you life, so that you may enjoy all things.

Jesus, the good news, invites us to be his partners to bring us good news.

Are you ready to accept that invitation? All God’s people say loudly, “YES.”

7. **New Year Sermon**

Bible text: Isaiah 43 : 18 -19

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

A. Introduction

Today is the first Sunday of the New Year of 2011. Isn't that wonderful that we are not in that difficult last year any longer? Did you all have good dreams on New Years' Eve? Korean people believe good dreams on the New Year's Eve will bring fortune throughout the New Year. Usually people are determined to make the New Year different from and better than the past year.

B. Let us reflect on the Scripture Text:

Today's scripture text comes from Isaiah 43: 18-19. God says, "*Do not remember old things but remember God is going to do a new thing.*"

From this Bible text our theme is "Old thing; new thing."

In Isaiah's days, Israel had been in Babylonian captivity for 70 years. Babylon defeated Israel and took almost the whole nation including people, wealth and resources to Babylon. Life in captivity was very difficult. They lost their country, their temple, family members, friends and all their belongings. In Babylon they knew no one, didn't speak their language and might have experienced cultural shock just as refugees anytime experience in a foreign country. They felt they had lost God too. They thought God failed and lost the war. They felt that it was God's punishment for their past sins. In the Babylonian captivity they also committed all kinds of sins, worshipping foreign gods, idols and doing many wrong things. But one day, God used the rising Persian Empire to defeat the brutal domination of Babylon. God won. Babylon lost.

God said to Israel, "I didn't forget you. I am going to do a new thing." God's new thing was God's plan to bring Israel back home. The old things God wouldn't remember and Israel mustn't remember were God's punishment of Israel into captivity and also forgiveness of all of their past bad things. God said, *I am not going to remember them and will bring you back home to your own country.* Therefore, don't think of old thing, and live a new life. Isn't that wonderful news?

C. Today, isn't God saying the same thing to us? Yes, God does. Now, what does that mean to us? Let us talk. What are your old things or your Babylonian captivity? What captivity have you been in? If you

feel comfortable talking about this, let us talk. Yes, that's right. When you cannot stop drinking, or taking street drugs, you are in captivity. When you cannot stop stealing, you are in captivity. When you keep on living in your past hurt, pain and anger, you are in captivity. When you cannot find a job and keep your street life too long, you are in captivity. What other captivity have you been in? Anyone would like to share?

What then should be your new things in the New Year? Can you call out something that should be your new plan in the New Year? Yes, stop substance abuse will be a new thing for many people. Yes, ending homelessness by finding jobs and apartment will be a new thing for many of you. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Yes, for some of you, going to college will be a new thing. Yes, reconnecting to your family will be a new thing for some of you. All in all not repeating your past life style will be really a new thing in the New Year

How can you start these new things? Just sitting and looking up to the sky won't automatically bring you new things. You must decide to be partner with God using all of your God-given will power. In other words, you must have God in your new plan. Respect God more than last year. Have more faith in God. Relying on God will give you courage and strength to keep on working toward your new plan in the New Year. In your New Year plan also include prayer and reading bible on daily basis. Trust God. Work with God. God needs you to help you. You will also work with us, the Nest Mission. We will work with you to achieve your new things and new plans.

D. What the New Things for the Nest Mission would be this year, as you wish?

Korean Nest Mission has something new for the New Year.

1. We are changing dinner program from Sunday to Friday evening, beginning with the first Friday in February, which is February 4th at the same location.
2. We will focus services on homeless persons.
3. We will add singing, message and prayer.
4. We will add Bible study, God's words in your life.
5. We will also help you to pray for yourself and for others.
6. We will meet the homeless person, one by one, during the week by appointment.

8. We will be working as a team.
9. You are not just guests to this dinner. You are our partners.
You are our families.

We won't force you to do these things. But we strongly encourage you to walk with us as we walk with you side by side.

E. My conclusion is that our new thing is Jesus Christ. This year, we are going to love him and work with him more to help bring many new things to you. Without Jesus Christ, we can't do much of a new thing. Without a change in us, there won't be a new thing for us. So, let us all experience something new this year. Let us all shout, "New Things, New Things." May God bless you with your plan to change.

8. Lent sermon - Ash Wednesday sermon

Scripture texts: PS. 51: 1-17

I. INTRODUCTION

We are walking into the "Lent" season. It is the period of 40 days beginning with Ash Wednesday to Easter. Lent is the time to remember Jesus' suffering and pain, to reflect upon our own lives and to repent seriously the way we live and commit to love and serve him more.

You see some volunteers and I are wearing purple shirts with the words - End Homelessness. When I developed these shirts, I chose the purple color which is the Lent Color. As we remember Jesus' suffering, we lament, repent, and commit to love him and serve him more. I chose the purple color to lament and repent for having so many homeless in this country and to commit to the mission of ending homelessness. I have been wearing a purple shirt since 1997, day and night. Many friends call me "a purple woman." It is my color of grief, repentance and commitment. It is also my mission color.

This year Ash Wednesday falls on March 9th and Easter falls on April 24.

I am starting early to talk about Ash Wednesday because I am not going to be here for the last two weeks of April.

The most visible and widespread ritual of Ash Wednesday is marking the forehead with ash, in the sign of cross saying

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," or saying, "Turn away from your sins and be faithful to the gospel. The ashes suggest a posture of penitence, and they remind us of our mortality and our humble place before God.

The second most familiar practice of a typical Ash Wednesday service is the communal recitation of Psalm 51. Expressing clear humility, David acknowledges his transgression and pleads for God's mercy. Let us read Ps. 51; 1-17 together and feel the heart of David:

A Psalm of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.⁴ Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.⁶ You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.¹⁶ For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

1. We have just read Ps, 51 which is known to be written by King David. In order to understand the heart of the author, David, we need to know some background of the writer. In the Bible, from his

boyhood, David was known to be a very generous, faithful, compassionate man of faith who loved and served God. However, after he became the king, he committed an unforgivable crime. He took Uriah's wife and committed adultery and murder. Uriah was one of 30 chosen men who commanded David's army. While Uriah was fighting in a war, David took advantage of Uriah's wife, Bathsheba and got her pregnant. In order to cover up his crime, David made a murder plot by sending Uriah to the forefront of the hardest fighting to have him killed. When the prophet, Nathan, confronted David and forced the king to acknowledge his transgressions, David cries out to God from a heart shredded by the guilt. That is Ps. 51.

2. Psalm 51 is David's plea to God, a prayer for forgiveness. David displays a painful awareness of his sins saying, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." He uses words, "transgression," "iniquity," "evil," to express his sins. He uses "have mercy," "be gracious," "steadfast love" to ask for forgiveness. The penitent employs five images for the remission of sin; "Blot out my transgressions," "Wash me," "Cleanse me," "Purge me with hyssop, and "Hide your face from my sins."

As a man of God, he knew he fell into temptation and caused harm to others. So, he poured out his soul before God deeply regretting what he had done. He trusted that God's mercy would forgive him. There was no way he could forgive himself. David truly repents and begs for a new start, a second chance. He begs God to "Create a clean heart in him." He knows that he cannot begin anew without God's mercy and grace. He trusts that God will accept his broken spirit and forgive him.

3. Sin is harmful to self and others. According to Albert Schweitzer, "The essence of Goodness is "Preserving life, promoting life, helping life to achieve its highest destiny. The essence of Evil is "Destroying life, harming life, hampering the development of life." David's sin surely harmed Bathsheba and Uriah and God. Our grave mistakes often destroy our relationships with self, others and God. For David, who had all the power as a king, took advantage of the powerless. He destroyed the life of Uriah and destroyed his family. The baby who was

born between David and Bathsheba died and became another victim. God said David's sin was to despise and scorn God.

4. How do we relate to David's confession of sins? Ps. 51 is not just

David's anguished prayer. It is also our prayer because before God's eyes "all are naked and laid bare." All of us are sinners. The author of the book, *Born to be Good*, says "We are born to be good and also born to be bad." We can be both ways and therefore constantly try to be good.

Augustine confessed, "*But if I was born in sin and guilt was with me already when my mother conceived me. Lord, where or when was I ever innocent?*" We are never innocent because in reality we are often alienated from God and from one another.

In this Lent season, many of you might identify with Jesus' suffering because many of you have been suffering. You know his pain and he knows your pain. We can also identify with David although we didn't commit the same crime (adultery and killing). We may regret some things that we have done. I sure do regret and repent some things that I have done. Therefore, it is very important that we pour out our sinful soul honestly before God and ask for God's mercy and forgiveness. I am sure God will hear us and forgive us.

5. As my concluding remarks I will quote the Christian writer, Frederick

Buechner, who writes, "After being baptized by John in the river of Jordan, Jesus went off alone into the wilderness where he spent forty days asking himself the question what it means to be Jesus. During Lent, we must ask what it means to be Jean Kim, Ken, Doug, Scott, Steve, Marvin? Let us make this Lent season time for reflection, time to repent and time to hope. Amen.

9. **Lent sermon – Sunday – Palm Sunday Sermon**

Scripture text: Mark 11: 7-10.

Theme today is "Which procession are you in?"

INTRODUCTION

What would you do if you have just one week left to live on earth?

Some homeless people might want to check in to a fancy hotel, take many showers, sleep on a comfortable warm bed for one week and die in that warm bed. Others might take a trip to a foreign country. Still others might spend one week with their children and family. This question sounds easy to answer but in fact, difficult because there might be too many things one might want to do.

Starting today, I am going to review Jesus' last week on earth which is called "Holy Week, or Passion Week." We are not at the Holy Week yet but, I start early because I will be gone for two weeks before and after the Easter. Today's bible verse comes from Mark 11: 7-10. Let us all read it together:

Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. 8. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. 9. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! 10. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

On the first day of his last week on earth, Sunday, he goes to Jerusalem from Galilee, which was a week prior to his execution. The distance from Galilee to Jerusalem was about hundred miles. It could have taken several days on foot. Don't we all wonder why in the last week of his life he went to Jerusalem, the city that led him to passion? To answer this question we need to understand the Jerusalem of Jesus' day and his relationship with her:

1. First-century Palestine was occupied by the Romans. The Empire was so exploitative that much of the peasant families' income was extracted through the instruments of tithes, taxes, tolls, rents, tribute, and confiscation. Rome sold the privilege of collecting taxes to "tax farmers," who were Jews. They were permitted to keep any excess above what the government required. Many Jewish farmers could not pay the Roman taxes and thus lost their land. Their mounting debts made them fall into day laborers, slavery, and robbers and beggars. It was a two-layered domination system: the local domination system and the Roman imperial domination system. Suppression, uproars, persecution, mass crucifixion on the cross, were common practice.

Corpses were left on the cross to be food for birds and animals or thrown into tiger's bin so that the whole body including bones was completely consumed. The whole purpose of such gruesome massive killing was to gain absolute control over the entire Jewish nation. This is the Jerusalem Jesus marched into.

2. What was happening in Jerusalem on that day Jesus entered?

When he arrived just outside Jerusalem, he told his disciples to get a brand new young donkey for him. The crowd which came with him from Galilee or joined him on the way took off their top garments, put them on the donkey and Jesus sat on it. Others spread their clothes and palm branches on the road cheering and shouting, "Hosanna (meaning Lord saves), blessed is the one who comes." Ever since, Christians call this day "Palm Sunday" because Jesus' followers spread palm branches on the road. It is also called "Jesus' Triumphant Entry."

Historians report that there were two processions on that Palm Sunday. One was Jesus' humble procession on a donkey from the east, being cheered by his peasant followers from Galilee. The other was an imperial procession of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Jesus' procession portrayed the kingdom of God. Pilate's procession portrayed the power of the Roman Empire. The imperial procession was well known in the Jewish homeland of the first century. It was the standard practice of the Roman governors of Judea to be in Jerusalem for the major Jewish festivals in case there was a trouble. There often was, especially at Passover, a festival that celebrates the Jewish people's liberation from Egyptian bondage. Egypt was another earlier empire. For example, on our independence day, July 4, riots could break out by the oppressed racial minorities although it rarely happens here. I often wonder what will happen if several million current and formerly homeless people demonstrate on the streets in every city demanding jobs and housing!

Jesus' procession was very humble with Jesus riding on a donkey. In sharp contrast, Pilate's procession was a show-off of the empire's power with cavalry on horses, foot soldiers, leather armor, helmets, weapons, banners, golden eagles mounted on poles, sun glinting on metal and gold, and also with sounds of the marching feet, the creaking

of leather, the clinking of bridles, and the beating of drums. Pilate's procession displayed not only imperial power, but also Roman imperial theology. According to this theology, the emperor was the ruler of Rome and the Son of God. Do you think Jesus would appreciate this? No. Hearing what he taught in his 3 year ministry, we don't think so.

3. Jesus' procession deliberately challenged what was happening on the other side of the city. While Pilate's procession displayed the power, glory, and violence of the empire, Jesus' procession displayed an alternative vision, the kingdom of God. It appeared to be an anti-imperial entrance affirming nonviolence that countered the violence-based triumphal entrance of Pilate's imperial power. The confrontation between the two kingdoms continues through the last week of Jesus' life. While the Holy Week is the story of our Lord Jesus who suffered for our sins, it was also socio-politically a confrontation with the Roman Empire. In this confrontation Jerusalem plays the central role.

If Jesus preached just, "Believe in Emperor God you will be saved," nothing bad could happen to him. He might have even been welcomed by Roman governor. But his silent, non-violent procession into this Jerusalem was his strong non-verbal challenge against this domination system, because Jewish religious authorities collaborated with Roman occupying forces and legitimated it in the name of God.

Now do you see what his march to Jerusalem meant and what the price was? Down the line, we will talk more about that the whole month. Mark recorded in 14:1-2 that two days before the Passover festival, the chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest and kill Jesus.

4. Do you see another empire in our time? There is a book titled "American Empire" written by Boston University professor. I know many of you sit in the library. Read it when you can and find out the similarities and differences between the American Empire and Roman Empire. In the United States, nearly 5 million people experience homelessness every year. 49 million people suffer from poverty and 47 million Americans don't have health insurance. In Washington State, as of July 1, 2011, 66,000 persons will lose their Basic Health Plan. 21,000 will lose Disability Lifeline benefits. 26,000 clients of Community Mental Health will experience funding cuts.

5. My concluding question for us today is between the two processions, which procession are we marching in? Which procession do we want to be in? I know homeless brothers and sisters might want to be in procession with Jesus. Do you? Do some of you wish to be in Pilate's procession? For some of us, one foot might be in Pilate's procession and the other foot is in Jesus' procession. Right?

Do you see this Jesus who is marching into Jerusalem to represent people like you in his day and today? He paid the price with his own life for his marching for you and for me. Is there anyone in this whole world who would march and die for you and me? He alone did it for you and me. Can we say, "thank you, Jesus, for marching in to Jerusalem on our behalf?" He keeps marching in all contemporary exploitive empires. Are you in Jesus' procession or in Pilate's? Lent is demanding our answer to this question. Let us pray.

10. Lent sermon – Monday

Scripture Text: Mark 11: 15 -18

Theme: House of Prayer

We are in Jesus' Passion Week. Last week, Sunday was his first day in Jerusalem. We talked about why Jesus marched into Jerusalem on a donkey, what Jerusalem looked like in those days, and what his silent marching into Jerusalem meant, etc. We ended with a question "Who are you marching with?"

Today we look at his second day, Monday, in Jerusalem. I chose the Bible verse from Mark 11: 15 -18. Let us all read together:

15 Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves; ¹⁶and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷He was teaching and saying, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"?' But you have made it a den of robbers.' ¹⁸And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him;

For those who weren't here last week, let me repeat briefly what the Jerusalem and the Temple looked like: The First-century Palestine was occupied by the Romans. The Roman Empire exploited Jewish people through the tithes, taxes, tolls, rents, tribute. Rome sold the privilege of collecting taxes to "tax farmers," who were Jews. They extracted as much as they could from their own people and kept the rest after paying required amount to Rome. Many Jewish farmers who could not pay the Roman taxes ended up losing their land, falling into day labor, slavery, robbers and beggars. Suppression, uproars, persecution, mass crucifixion on the cross, were common practice.

First, today we will talk about his second day, Monday, in Jerusalem. Jesus went into the Jerusalem Temple. What was the Temple like in his day and why did he go to temple first?

The Rome assigned the role of local administration to the temple and its authorities. Jerusalem Temple was also the center of imperial tax system that collected taxes. The Jerusalem temple now became the central economic and political institution. In this system, temple authorities were the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes who became wealthy land owners. Thus, the Jerusalem temple was the center of local collaboration with Rome. The Jerusalem Temple was quite different from our churches today. While we can worship at any church anywhere, the Jews in those days treated Jerusalem Temple as THE only residence of God on earth just as there is only one White House in the whole world for the U.S. citizens. So the Jews worship there only. At special occasions, Jews came to worship there from all over the world. Can you imagine this Temple, God's only residence on earth being a business center selling and buying things for the offering and a tax office?

Our second point is what did he do in the Temple? Anyone remember? Yes, he drove out all the sellers and buyers in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. Anyone remember why did he do that? Yes, he had two reasons for doing that: First reason was, "My house shall be called a "House of prayer for all the nations." Second reason was, "But you have made it a den of robbers."

I want to reflect upon these two points - "Den of Robbers" and "House of Prayer." For your reference, first, let me add this: Today we bring money to the church as our offering. But in those days, people brought animals, crops and coins to the temple as sacrifices for their sins.

Firstly, den meant in those days a cave in the mountains where robbers set up their stronghold, plot further crimes, and guard their loot. From the quotation's context in Jeremiah 7 and 26, a "den" was a hideaway, a safe house, a refuge. Therefore, den was the place where robbers escape justice.

"Robbery" refers to what is going on in the outer Court of the Gentiles. The outer court was the only part where Gentiles were allowed in the temple. It was a hubbub of activity. People were exchanging coins so that pilgrims from other lands could pay the temple tax. Dealers were supplying pilgrims with certified clean sacrificial animals. Officials sold doves to the poor which were less expensive alternatives to sacrificial lambs. Therefore, there was profit-taking going on. The religious establishment had to certify animals "clean." Thus, they could reject animals that pilgrims presented and sell their own at much higher prices. They could set exchange rates on currency unfairly. They could even overcharge for the doves, which were made available to the poor. The temple court was also being used as a shortcut; the shortest route from the Kidron valley into Jerusalem right through the temple court. It served as a short-cut street. Can you picture a very noisy, busy and chaotic atmosphere in the temple instead of calm and quiet place for meditation? We can tell Jesus was upset about the commercialism, excessive profit taking by temple officials and robbing of the pilgrims, the poor (11: 15-17) and widows (12:40). By filling the outer court with merchandise, they robbed Gentiles of their place of prayer. Ultimately, they were robbing God. They stole the honor that belongs to God (12:38-40), and they withheld their love (12:28-34; cf. Jer. 7:30). They were not giving God what belongs to God (12:17).

Jeremiah said: *"This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," (Jer. 7:4). The people commit abominations, and sinners stand before God in the temple saying, "We are safe!" (Jer. 7:10). But they are not.*

According to Mark, Jesus considered the religious leaders a bunch of robbers.

Secondly, he called the Temple, “the House of Prayer.” In Jesus' days, neither Jesus nor anyone else could stand where the money changers sat and the pure animals were sold, saying that the temple was not open to all people. In the outer court, where Gentiles are welcome to worship alongside Jews, there was no place for all the nations, all people.

In his days and today, God observes much religious activity in the temple or church. God is asking, where is worship, Where is prayer in all this commotion and noise? They have perverted the temple. It has become a den of robbers. It is no longer a house of prayer.

Where does God see anyone loving God and neighbor with heart, mind, soul and strength (12:30-33)? In the Old Testament, God repeatedly said, "I reject your worship because of your lack of justice" (Amos 5:21-24).

Lord require of us to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. (Mic. 6:6-8) God said: "When you stretch your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers. I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow". (Is. 1:15-17).

Since God is justice, worship cannot be separated from justice because worship or union with a God of justice empowers the worshipper for a life of justice. Jesus wasn't seeing any of this and ended up carrying out a dramatic demonstration. He stopped the trading, turned over the tables and chairs, and blocked off the shortcuts and the merchandise traffic.

Scholars claim that Jesus' actions loudly proclaimed the *already present* Kingdom of God against Jewish high-priestly collaboration. In that criticism, he stands *with* the prophet Zechariah for the anti-imperial entry against violence and with Jeremiah for the anti-temple action against injustice. He also stands *against* those forms of Christianity that were used throughout the centuries to support imperial violence and injustice.

He stands *against* many contemporary churches which have many activities but no true worship - No justice but apathy toward the poor and homeless.

Our third point is "What are Jesus' words and action telling us today?" Is God asking us the same question? I see all the activities going on here, setting up dinner table, getting food ready, eating and, distributing daily necessities, etc. Where is true worship and prayer in all this commotion and noise? God is asking!

Therefore, having time for singing, prayer and worship is our answer to God. When we do that, our attitude must be right for worship. If you are invited to the White House by the President, how would you present yourself? Anybody has any idea? When you come here, do you believe that you are invited by Jesus Christ? I wouldn't expect the homeless brothers and sisters to show up with clean clothes on. But I would expect you to present yourself at least "sober." because we respect and honor God and Jesus. When you appear before the President of the United States, wouldn't you present yourself at least sober because you respect the president?

We do everything in this one room. But let us not make it a den of chaos. When we worship God, let us put all of our hearts, souls, and minds together. When a minister preaches, let us be quite, pay your full attention, concentrate and focused. When we pray to God, let us be honest with God. God knows all about our thoughts and actions, we might as well be honest with God. When we pray for others, let us be sincere so that God will hear you prayer.

I want all of us to get into a habit of singing the communion song before our dinner because I consider our meal is the heavenly banquet and dining with God.

I did this with homeless women downtown when I served the Church of Mary Magdalene. I also want us to say the Lord's Prayer after the pastoral prayer. Let us make this place "A house of prayer for all people" as Jesus claimed. Let us all repeat loudly, "House of Prayer." "House of Prayer." Amen.

11. Lent sermon – Tuesday

Scripture Text: Mark 12:28-34 (Matt. 22:34-40; Luke 10: 25-28; Rom. 13: 8-10)

Theme: The Great Commandment

INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to talk about Jesus' important saying on his third day in Jerusalem. Anyone remember what he did on the first day, Sunday? Yes, he marched into Jerusalem with people who came with him from Galilee. Anyone remember what he did on the second day? He entered the temple and turned over tables and chairs, because the temple had become a den of robbers claiming the temple must be a House of Prayer.

Today we look at his third day in Jerusalem. There were arguments and debates with Jesus on many issues but I chose an important question raised by a scribe. What would you say if I ask you to summarize the whole Bible in two sentences? Anyone has any idea?

Let us now read our bible text and see what it says. All look at the screen and read it together. Mark 12:28-31:

28 One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' 29 Jesus answered... 'The first is, 30 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." 31 The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.'

1. One of the scribes asked Jesus, *"Which commandment is the first of all?"*

This question comes from a "Scribe," who was an expert in interpreting the Old Testament Law for people in those days. This question was known to be an ongoing popular discussion in those days because there were too many laws to keep. In the first century, they had only first 5 books in the Old Testament. They were called Torah. But the Torah contained 613 laws (365 prohibitions and 248 commands). It was very difficult for people to keep all these laws. Punishment for violation was severe too. So in Jesus' days, Jewish teachers were wrestling with the question of how all these commandments relate to each other, and how can they be summarized

in one or more basic commandment on which all other laws hang together. Therefore, scribes were challenged to develop a single, simple, working principle that would encompass all of the other statutes.

So a Scribe came to Jesus and asked "*Which commandment is the first of all?*" This question has too frequently been misinterpreted by many people as a priority question. The question is NOT about chronology, "Which was given first." NOT about priority, "Which is more important than the other?" It has more to do with centrality. The question is, "Which commandment is at the heart of the law?" Which commandment is the most important of all? Which is the chief commandment of all? Which commandment determines the proper application of all the others? Therefore, he is asking, "What is most central?" "What matters most?" His question is a very good and legitimate one that everyone in those days was asking. Even today, we want to ask the same question, right?

2. Jesus answered, "*The first is, 'You shall love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength' (Dent. 6:5-6). The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Lev. 19:18). There is no other commandment greater than these.*" Then the scribe agreed with Jesus. No one else raised any more questions. The Bible says because no one could beat Jesus in such a debate.

Because Jesus said, the first and the second, people tend to interpret it as a priority answer, thinking the first one has higher priority and the second one is less important. That is not what Jesus was saying. What he meant is that the commandments to love God and neighbor stand together at the heart of the Torah (Law). It states that everything *in the law and the prophets* hangs on these two commandments. The multitude of laws in Scripture are valid *in as much as* and *insofar as* to love God and neighbor. Some scholars call it "Twin Commandments" or "Double Commandments." "Love your God" is called vertical love between God and us. "Love your neighbor" is called horizontal love between human beings. The two cannot be separated. They are one. The vertical love must accompany the horizontal love. The two must stay together. One without the other wouldn't work.

3. Love your God refers to an active, caring love that invests heart, soul, mind, and strength in the service of God and others. To love others adequately requires a redirection of these energies. Instead of active investment of our energies to serve ourselves, we are called to active investment of them in the service of God and others (cf. 10: 43-45). To love God above all else means giving to God what belongs to God; our heart, soul, mind, and strength. These belong to God.

A decade before Jesus, the great Jewish teacher Hillel replied to a Gentile who asked for a concise summary of Jewish law, "*What you yourself hate, do not do to your neighbor; this is the whole Law, the rest is commentary. Go and learn it.*"

Because the commandments to love God and to love your neighbor are separated in Old Testament Scriptures, the Pharisees had an excuse to lower the priority of the second commandment. Even today, many Christians do that. Jesus takes away their excuse by fusing into one simple and inseparable commandment what they believe about God, how they relate to Him, and how they treat their neighbor. To love one's neighbor as one's self means to refuse to accept the divisions between the righteous and sinners, the rich and poor, friends and enemies, and Jews and Gentiles.

You and I know how hard to love God and our neighbor because loving God is not just a spiritual term because it is not possible to love God without accompanying love our neighbor. Love our neighbor means our action. Therefore, without this action loving God is not possible. (-- RE-write

Many of us find it also hard to love our neighbors because too often we put our neighbors in the category of "others" and discriminate against them instead of loving them. Everyone has many "others; those of other races, other nations, other cultures, other parts of town, other religious beliefs, other political ideologies, and those who are so other that we call them enemies. In America, the poor and homeless are others to many people who discriminate against them. I noticed these others abuse and take advantage of each other instead of feeling sorry and empathetic with each other. I heard homeless people

use and abuse each other by stealing from and exploiting each other. Anyone among you feels like being treated as one of these "others?" I am sure many have experienced that.

4. Jesus' point is to include all these others and love them as our neighbors. Jesus' critique of the temple system (11:15-17) was that they have kept their system running, but have failed to love God and neighbor. Jesus' conclusion is that there is something more important than all the sacrifices and ceremonies. What really matters is the condition of the heart. What matters is the quality of one's relationship to God. What matters is the quality of relationship within the community and with those in need. Love, not legalism or ceremonialism, is the way of God's kingdom.

It is the commandment for us too. How are we doing with this commandment – Love God and Love our neighbor?

Theologian Schlabach says "If we are freed from slavery to sin and self, we are also freed to live for others." The way we can love all others is recognition of who we are, what are our behaviors and action, repent, change and be free from sins. That will make it possible for us to love God and others. Therefore, it takes lots of work to love God and our neighbors. My concluding remark is that when we put our act together then we can love our God and neighbor. All God's people say, Amen.

12. Lent sermon: Tuesday

Mark 12: 13-17

Theme: Pay tax

INTRODUCTION

We are in the Lenten season. It is a season when we think of Jesus' passion.

We grieve and repent for his suffering on our behalf to forgive our sins. This month we are reflecting upon Jesus last week Jesus on earth. Today we will talk about the third day. In Jerusalem, Temple authorities try to find fault with Jesus to kill him. He teaches, argues, debates and deals with all the traps adversaries put on him. To learn

about a particular challenge let us read the bible text, Mark 12: 14-17 and see what the argument is on Jesus' third day.

Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay them, or should we not?' But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, 'Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.' ¹⁶ And they brought one. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, 'Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they were utterly amazed at him.

As our text explains, the argument is about paying tax. Tax issue is gravely important then and as it is now. These days, we too are serious about paying taxes. No one enjoys paying taxes. In the U.S. many people decide who to vote depending on the candidate's position on tax. Especially in this time of recession, local and federal governments try to raise tax to pay off the debts and to do domestic programs. They challenge the rich to pay more taxes to overcome the recession. The rich don't like that idea at all.

1. **First, Let us reflect upon our text:**

Who are trapping Jesus? In the story, "Pharisees and Herodians" are sent to trap Jesus. The Jewish authorities are the chief priest, scribes and elders. Pharisees and Herodians allied with each other and collaborated with the Roman Empire. Therefore, they were the adversaries of Jesus.

What was the question? "Should we pay tax to the emperor or should we not?" In those days, it was a very serious matter for all, including common Jewish people, Roman Empire and Jewish collaborators of the Rome. The Roman Empire profited from per capita head tax, land tax and agriculture tax from the Jewish people. For Jewish collaborators, it was also matter of their livelihood because they were the ones who collected tax on behalf of Roman Empire and they too benefited from the tax. Their political position would also be seriously threatened if a multitude of Jews refused to pay the tax. For common Jewish people, the taxation was economically burdensome. It also symbolized the Jewish homeland's lack of sovereignty. It was the oppression of the Jews by an alien Empire. The extreme nationalists or Zealots had refused to pay tax saying, "NO." The Herodians said, "Yes." The Pharisees went along with paying it,

although they did not like it. The resistance to pay tax had become a headache to the Roman and the Jewish authorities. Therefore, the Jewish authorities sent the Pharisees and Herodians to trap Jesus with this burning question about the tax.

Why was the question a trap? Because either answer would get Jesus in trouble. If Jesus says, "Pay," he will offend the crowds and risked discrediting himself with the crowd that praised Jesus and followed him; If he said, "Do not pay," he could be charged with denial of Roman authority with sedition. That was treated as a serious crime in those days.

How did Jesus respond? Jesus told them to show him a denarius. So they brought one. A denarius was a silver coin equal to a day's wage. His interrogators easily got one out of their pocket. Jesus looked at it and then asked, "Whose head and whose title is this?" In other words, "Whose image and inscription is this?" Their answer was, "The emperor's." Jesus then said, Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.

Our second point is what are some of the implications?

Those Jewish who pulled out a coin out of their pocket must have forgotten that Jewish law and oral law considered the image on the coin idolatry. Thus, in the first century, the Jews used a coin that had no image on it. Many Jews would not carry a coin that has a human image on it. But Jesus' interrogators did have it. It was a serious matter. Instead of trapping Jesus, they themselves were tested and they ended up proving that they violated Jewish law and were hypocrites. Jesus' strategy was brilliant. It was a counter trap on his opponents.

What belongs to God? For Jesus and many of his Jewish contemporaries, everything belongs to God. The land of Israel belongs to God. Leviticus 25:23 says, "*The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants.*" The vineyard belongs to God, not to the local collaborators, not to Rome. The whole earth belongs to God (Ps. 14:1).

What belongs to Caesar? The implication is "nothing." Because they had seized the land of the Jews. Nothing in the land of Israel belonged to Caesar. He didn't say it out loud but implicitly meant "we give everything to God" but "nothing to Caesar." But those who assumed the occupied land of Israel and Israelites belonged to Caesar

heard as if Jesus was saying “give to Caesar what belongs to him” and “to God what belongs to God.”

Some interpret that “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" also establishes a priority of loyalty. Since God created us in the image of God, God owns us. We belong to God. Whatever bears the image of God - humankind that is made in God's likeness belongs exclusively to God. God is therefore due the highest loyalty and ultimate obedience of persons, who are God's own, not to Caesar.

Some others interpret Jesus' answer to mean that the state is due the loyalty and support of its citizens. While we owe some duty to the state, our primary loyalty belongs to God. For Jesus, the land of Israel was taken and robbed by the Romans. What Jesus makes clear is that our primary obligation to God includes and transcends every other duty including our duty to the state.

Our final point is reflecting the story to our own social context: Many people in the U.S. pay tax reluctantly. Most of us don't think that we are blessed and therefore, pay some of our income for the country. We think we give out of our own wealth. But it is God-given wealth. As people of God, and citizens of this country, we have a privilege and a responsibility to God and to the state.

Is there anyone who gives God a monetary offering? Is there anyone who pays tax to the state? As people of God, you don't bring any offering to God because you don't have money. As citizens, most of you don't pay tax to the state either because most of you are low income people.

We are still alive because some people pay tax and God cares for us. Food stamps, SSI, Medicaid, GAU - all come from the tax money. Therefore, we owe God and state, or tax payers for our sustenance.

What can we do for God and for the state? Although we have no income or have low income, we must do something. We can't keep on wasting ourselves because we don't have jobs. Then what can we do for God and for the state or tax payers? Yes, we can give them what we have. What do you have? Yes, time, talents, and yourself. Yes, you can serve God and state with yourself, your talents and time.

This is the Lenten season. It is time to reflect upon our lives. Jesus suffered for us. We can't waste our lives in drinking or doing nothing.

To serve God and our country we give ourselves, our time and talents for good causes. This is our home work in this Lenten Season. If you agree with me, all God's people say, AMEN.

13. Lent sermon: Wednesday

Scripture: Mark 14: 1-10

Theme: Best gifts

Do you all still remember we are in Lenten Season? It is the time to reflect upon our lives seriously, repent and repair.

I have a few questions for you. One is: Do you remember getting the best gift from someone? Let's name some. My second question is: Can you name someone you want to give the best gift that you own? My third question is; if you know your loved one will die in a few days, what would you like to do for that person?

Today we are going to talk about Jesus' 4th day, Wednesday, in Jerusalem.

It was a very stressful and anxious time for Jesus. He was standing between the plot by chief priest, elders and scribes to kill him (14: 1-2) and Judas' plan to betray and hand him (14: 10-11) over to killers. He knew he had only a couple of days left to walk on his two feet in this world, and he would face the most horrible, the most painful, the most unbearable and the most cruel death. In that desperate moment something beautiful was happening to him by a woman. What was it? Let us read today's Bible texts together from Mark 14: 1-10:

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; ² for they said, 'Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.'

³ While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. ⁴But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way?' ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, * and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her.

⁶But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. ⁹Truly I tell you, wherever the good news* is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. ¹¹When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

During the day Jesus was in Jerusalem teaching and debating but at night Jesus retreated to Bethany for the night rest. Bethany must have been a nearby town to Jerusalem. He had friends in Bethany; Mary, Martha, Lazarus and others. In Bethany, while he was having dinner at the house of Simon, the leper, a woman came in with an alabaster jar full of nard oil. It was a very costly ointment, worth of one years wage of a day laborer. Many of you are day laborers. You know how hard it is to save money especially worth of your one year wage because it is big money.

Who was that woman? Some versions say she was Mary, Lazarus' sister. Other version would say she was a sinner. Others say she was Mary Magdalene. Since it happened in Bethany, it could have been Lazarus' sister because they lived in Bethany. Or it could have been Mary Magdalene because she travelled with Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem and she was with Jesus till his last breath on the cross. Mary Magdalene even followed when Jesus' body was laid down.

Anyway, it was best and precious thing she had saved which was an alabaster jar full of expensive ointment. She broke open the jar and poured ointment on Jesus' head and anointed him. Anointing the head of a king or a priest meant a special calling from God. Prophets in Ancient Israel established a king after anointing him. People also anointed a body to prepare for burial.

Her story written in all four Gospels suggests that this story was very important to early Christian communities.

There were two immediate contrasting responses; one from Jesus' disciples and the other was from Jesus himself.

Disciples blamed her for wasting the expensive ointment; "*Some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her.*" They didn't understand why she did it. Nor did she explain why she did it.

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus told disciples three times that he would suffer and die on the cross and would rise three days later. But they didn't believe him. They didn't understand that Jesus trip to Jerusalem was a final one.

But if it was Mary Magdalene, she too heard it, did understand and believed what Jesus said. Some historians say that she was very insightful to Jesus' messages and understood him better than other disciples. She wanted to do something for him. She wanted to give him the best gift that she owned. She must have known who Jesus was. She must have been very appreciative of and loved him so much.

In response to disciple's criticism of her action, Jesus said, *Leave her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.*

What is the essence of the story?

Jesus was on the way to the cross. Jerusalem for the disciples was a place of victory while it was a place of suffering and death for Jesus. Of all those who heard Jesus' three prophecies of his death and resurrection, she alone heard and believed what he said. She decided to give him her best. This woman's anointing of Jesus is a symbolic act of declaration that Jesus is Messiah. This woman's act also foreshadows Jesus' crucifixion (Mk 14:8-9). This woman's act is contrasted with disciples, who never understood Jesus. It is also contrasted with Judas, who betrayed his teacher. Her gracious act is also contrasted with the religious leaders' plot to kill him. She truly loved Jesus and understood him.

Therefore, for Jesus, this woman's act was the best gift for him. So, he gave her his best gifts in return with his highest praise that anyone

had ever heard from Jesus before. *Wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.* Two thousand years later, even you and I hear about her inspiring story. Christians remember her and her story forever.

Theologians, Spong and Borg wrote that, *In the Gospel of Mark, she is the first believer. She was the first Christian. She believed in the word of Jesus even before his resurrection. She represents the perfect disciple-leader. This passage shows contrast between believer and traitor, and the best and the worst. Betraying Jesus represents the worst action possible.*

Jesus is about to give his best gift. In two days, he was going to give his own life for all of us. That is the best gift he could give us to forgive our sins.

Our concluding question for ourselves can be: Do you appreciate Jesus for giving his life for you? Do you want to give him your best gift? What would that be? With what can you make him happy? Any idea? Is your sobriety the best gift for Jesus? If it is, let's do it. What else? My best gift for Jesus might be loving and serving YOU even in limited way. Let us now close our eyes and pray to Jesus and promise our best gifts for him in this Lent season. Now you can open your eyes. All God's people say "Amen."

14. Lent sermon: Thursday – Jesus' Last Supper

Mark 14: 17-25

17 When it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.'¹⁹They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, 'Surely, not I?' ²⁰He said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. ²¹For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.'²² While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.'²³ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. ²⁴He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

INTRODUCTION

We have been talking about Jesus' last week on earth. Today we are going to talk about Jesus' fifth day, Thursday, in Jerusalem. On his fifth day, many things were happening in Jerusalem. Of many significant events, I am going to focus on Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. The Last Supper is very important to all Christian Churches.

Is there anyone who has lost loved one(s)? Do you remember your last supper with him or her before their passing? Where did you eat your last supper with him or her? What kind of food was their last supper? The reason I asked you to think of the last meal that your loved ones had with you is to help us to think of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples and the meaning of that Supper for us today.

Knowing he was going to be arrested and killed, Jesus had his Last Supper with his disciples. Jesus' Last Supper was not just an ordinary supper. It was a special Supper. Christian churches have been celebrating his Last Supper for the past 2,000+ years because his Last Supper has significant meaning for the church.

1. The Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples was a Jewish Passover meal. Jesus wanted to have the Passover meal as his last Supper with his disciples. What is Passover? Passover is the great annual Jewish celebration of God's greatest act of liberating Israel from Egyptian bondage. When God killed all the first born in Egypt to liberate Israelites, God passed over the Jewish homes that had blood of lamb on their door post. Therefore, Jewish Passover is their story of deliverance and liberation. Passover was their birth as a nation. It was their Independence Day. As we celebrate July 4, every year, they celebrated their Passover every year with a special meal of lamb meat and unleavened bread as their ancestors had on the day they left Egypt.

2. Jesus' Last Supper has explicit connection to Jesus' impending death. Jesus took bread and wine, and blessed them and thanked God for them and said, *This is my body that is given for you.* He took a cup and said *this is the new covenant in my blood.*

The Christian Church interprets that breaking bread to mean Jesus' body that was broken for the sake of others. Pouring wine means

blood that Jesus shed to forgive sins of many people. Therefore, this Last Supper Jesus shared with disciples was not only his farewell meal but also has to do with confessing our sins and being forgiven because he had given his body and blood to forgive all the sins of humanity. This is what the Christians confess ever since.

All twelve disciples participated in the bread-as-body and wine-as-blood. By *eating* the bread and *drinking* the cup, Jesus wanted his disciples to commit to live out what Jesus did - giving his body and blood to save the world.

In the biblical setting, this meal is usually labeled "the Last Supper." In the setting of the church, when the ritual of bread and cup is reenacted, the event is called the Lord's Supper, Communion, or Eucharist. The Eucharist derives from the Greek verb *Eucharisteo*, means "*giving thanks*".

3. Jesus often shared meals with people. He often taught at meals. The event of a woman anointing Jesus also took place at a meal. Banquets were topics of his parables. His meal practice was often criticized by his opponents, because Jesus often ate with tax collectors and sinners" (Mark 2:16) who were the undesirables, the marginalized and outcasts. With whom one shared a meal was very significant in that society. It might be somewhat true today too. If I had a lunch with our governor what would you think of that? I have had a lunch with 21 homeless friends so far up to this week. When you are invited to have a lunch with me, how that makes you feel? You are invited to our Friday dinner. How does that make you feel? Jesus' meal practice was about inclusion in a society with sharp social boundaries and discrimination.

For Jesus, they were real meals. For Jesus, real food - bread - mattered. In his teaching, "bread" symbolized the material basis of existence, as in the Lord's Prayer Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." For Jesus' peasant audience, bread - enough food for the day - was a central survival issue of their lives, just as the supper we offer here is for your survival - not a symbolic one.

4. My concluding remark is that the congregation eats bread and drinks wine in remembrance of Jesus' death. We too are invited to share his life and share what we have with others.

One scholar said,

"Neither denials nor even betrayals are the worst sin against Jesus or God. The worst sin is despair. That is the loss of faith that repentance will always obtain forgiveness. All of us can make mistakes and commit sins. But if we repent, Jesus would always forgive us. That is the meaning of his Last Supper. Do you all get that? Now, let us close our eyes and confess our mistakes to Jesus and ask forgiveness. For meals, we sing "Let us break bread together on our knees." Let us take this dinner we offer as the reminder of Jesus' Last Supper.

15. Lent sermon: Thursday – Disowning Jesus

Bible Text: Mark 14: 17:50;

Theme: Disowning Jesus

INTRODUCTION

We four pastors have been talking about Jesus' last week on earth. Today is my turn to talk about Jesus' fifth day in Jerusalem. The fifth day is called "Maundy Thursday" in Christian tradition. This Maundy Thursday moves Jesus' last week toward its climax. Maundy derives from the Latin word for the "mandate" - the new commandment that Jesus left as his last gift for his followers in John 13:34:

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another just as I loved you"

Maundy Thursday begins the most serious part of the most sacred week of the Christian year. It is also called "Holy Thursday." This fifth day was emotionally most difficult day for Jesus because he was anticipating the crucifixion the next day. My Bible text comes from Mark 14: 17-50. Let us read together:

¹⁷ When it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'one of you will betray me' woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' ²⁶ When they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, 'You

will all become deserters; ²⁹Peter said to him, 'Even though all become deserters, I will not.' ³⁰Jesus said to him, 'this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' ³¹But he said vehemently, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And all of them said the same. ³²They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' ³³He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. ³⁴And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' ³⁷He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? ... The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴²Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.' ⁴³Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. ⁴⁴Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.' ⁴⁵So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. ⁵⁰All of them deserted him and fled.

What is the theme of this passage? We can choose a few themes from this text but I chose "Disowning Jesus" as our theme because this paragraph uses words betray, denial, and desert ten times. It seems to be the central theme of the paragraph. I am going to make a few points.

My first point is that Thursday was the most difficult day for Jesus; knowing he would be killed by the most cruel and painful crucifixion on the cross, his soul was overwhelmed with sorrow. He threw himself upon the ground, being filled with anguish. Mark describes Jesus as "distressed," "agitated," "deeply grieved, even to death," Mark presents him as a vulnerable human being. As the Son of God, he became one of us. Many of us can relate to such an anguish, desperation and helplessness. Anyone would like to share your experience?

My second point is that through the whole paragraph Jesus uses the words betray, deny Jesus, and desert ten times; at his last supper, he announces that one of the twelve disciples will betray him. Jesus said of his betrayer, Judas, "woe to him who betrayed me. It would have been better for that one not to have been born." Jesus took betrayal

very seriously and sounds angry, who wouldn't? After supper, on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, he predicted that all of his disciples would desert him. Yes, they did by falling asleep while Jesus was agonizing. Jesus also predicted Peter, the chief disciple of Jesus, would deny him 3 times. When the temple police force arrived with Judas to arrest Jesus on the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus call them "betrayers." While Jesus was being arrested, all of his disciples deserted him and fled. That evening, Peter denied Jesus three times. But Peter repented, broke down and wept. Judas sold Jesus for money and betrayed him. He felt so bad about this, he threw money at the betrayers and killed himself. One scholar said, neither denials nor even betrayals are the worst sin against Jesus or God. The worst sin is despair - loss of faith that repentance will *always obtain forgiveness*. Had Judas broken down, wept, and repented, he too would have been forgiven.

People also betrayed Jesus by giving false testimony against Jesus. The high priest, elders, the scribes, and whole council betrayed and disowned one of their own Jewish brothers, their own rabbi colleague, and their own spiritual leader by crucifying him when no crime had been committed. (??????)

The whole chapter is talking about disowning Jesus. Judas disowned Jesus by selling him for money. Disciples disowned Jesus by falling asleep and later by deserting him. Peter disowned Jesus three times by denying his teacher. Jesus' own people disowned him by standing with killers. Jesus was denied, betrayed, abandoned, deserted and disowned by his colleagues, friends, and by his disciples at his most critical moment in his life. No one stood with him except a few women who came with Jesus from Galilee. He walked all alone on that lonesome death valley with only a few women nearby him.

Anyone would like to share your experience of being disowned in your life and in time of your despair no one was there for you. You might have disowned by your spouses, children, friends, or even by society. Or did you disown anyone?

My third point is about how Jesus handled his despair, anguish fear of death and betrayals. I am going to read Mark 14: 36: "*Take this cup away from me, yet, not what I want, but what you want.*" At first, Jesus tried

to avoid the cup of death but decided to drink it if it is God's will. In other words, if it accomplishes the purpose he came to the world he was willing to pay the price. He had accepted and overcome such an anguish and betrayal by committing his life into the hands of God. When he entrusted all of these into the hands of God in absolute trust, he wasn't afraid to take the crucifixion. It is an amazing trust in God. Do we have such a trust in God?

One day, a little boy was caught in a burning house. He was looking out through upstairs window crying and screaming. His father screamed back at him from the ground to jump into his arm. First the child, looking down the window and was scared to jump, crying and didn't know what to do. But his father kept calling on him to jump, saying, "Son, trust me, I will catch you into my arm and you will be safe. I promise. Jump." The child put his total trust into his father, and jumped from the window. The father caught him into his arm safely. The child was saved from the fire. Do we have such a trust in God?

Jesus story on this Holy Thursday reminds us of many of our own experience of being betrayed and disowned, and our own betrayal of someone. Jesus' experience also reminds us of our lack of trust in God in time of our despair.

My conclusion is this: When the disciples and when we disowned Jesus, we disowned God. When the disciples and we disowned Jesus and God, we disowned ourselves. We are created by God and owned by God. When parents disown their children they disown themselves because they gave birth to their children. When we hate our parents and never see or love them, we disown them. When we disown our parents, we disown ourselves because we come from them. When we disown anyone, we disown ourselves. We all belong to God's family. God is our creator and our parent. Therefore, we never can disown anyone. The only option we have is to love one another.

God never disowns us. God is always with us, loves us and is on our side. Therefore, we offer you an opportunity to worship God every Friday. For many of you, this is weekly worship since you don't go to church on Sundays. Going to churches for meals is not same as going to church to worship God. Therefore, we urge you to come early to sing to God and worship God.

Lenten season is the time to think of Jesus suffering and also review our own life seriously, if we disowned Jesus and ourselves by our behaviors and life styles.

This is the time we need to repent those behaviors.

Jesus had overcome his death by trusting God. We must learn from Jesus to put all of our troubles and despair in God's hands. May God bless you and guide you in this Lenten season to walk with Jesus. Amen.

16. Lent sermon: Friday

Scripture Text: Matt. 27: 20-23, 26,28-31, 35-37, 45-46, 50, 55-56.

Theme: Cross/Crucifixion

Introduction

The last few weeks we have been talking about what Jesus did in Jerusalem during his last week of his life. Today is his 6th day in Jerusalem, which is called Good Friday, a very painful and sad Friday in Christian tradition.

Why do people call it "Good Friday?" Someone died the most horrible death. What is so good about it? Does it make any sense to you? Let us hear how scholars interpret it: In Greek Christianity it is called "the Holy and Great Friday."

In Roman language, "Holy Friday," and in German, "Sorrowful Friday." In the English speaking world, it is, of course, "Good Friday." The origin of the English designation is uncertain. It may have driven from "God's" Friday or may have begun as Good Friday. In either case, it may come from German, where the day was also known as *Gottes Freitag* ("God's Friday") and as *Gute Freitag* ("Good Friday"). It was a very sad day for many people in his day and also today for Christians.

I chose Scripture texts from Matthew. It is a long statement. Let us read together:

²⁰Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. ²¹The governor again said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' ²²Pilate said to them, 'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' All of them said, 'Let him be crucified!' ²³Then he asked, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let him be crucified!' ²⁶So he released

Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' ³⁰They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. ³⁵And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; ³⁶then they sat down there and kept watch over him. ³⁷Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' ⁴⁵From noon on, darkness came over the whole land* until three in the afternoon. ⁴⁶And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ⁵⁰Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. ⁵⁵Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. ⁵⁶Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

From this long paragraph, my theme is Cross/Crucifixion.

First point: What was the Crucifixion like?

Those of you who watched Mel Gibson's movie, would you say something about how Jesus died? Yes, he was tortured, humiliated, flogged, undressed, dressed, mocked, stricken, spitted, and condemned to death by crucifixion on the cross.

A cross for a capital punishment was used only by Romans. Not by Jews. That might be the reason why the Jewish authorities took Jesus to Pilate. Romans used a crucifixion for a very definite type of capital punishment such as for runaway slaves or rebel insurgents who subverted Roman law and order and thereby disturbed the Roman peace (Pax Romana). Furthermore, as imperial terrorism, it was always as public as possible. It was a calculated social deterrent. Victims were hung up as a public warning not to protest against Rome. Along with other supreme penalties, such as being burned alive or eaten alive by beasts, what made it *supreme* was not just the amount of suffering or even humiliation involved, but that there might be nothing left or allowed for burial. The victim usually carried the cross along with

notice of the crime attached. Although Jesus was given an honorable burial in a family tomb, other victims were often crucified low enough to the ground that not only carrion birds but scavenging dogs could reach them. And they were often left on the cross after death until little was left of their bodies even for a possible burial. After hearing such horrific violence to human beings we cannot use the word "Cross" lightly.

Second Point: Why was Jesus killed?

There are several ways to look at Jesus' death. Scholars interpret what is written in the Bible in reference to the crucifixion of Jesus. One interpretation can be made from the standpoint of the Christian faith and another from the socio-political context of his days and his relationship with power holders. I am going to present you interpretations of many scholars:

1) Theological reason: He died for the sins of the world. All of us are sinners. In order for God to forgive sins, a sacrifice must be offered. But it would not have been adequate for an ordinary human being to be the sacrifice, for such a person would be a sinner and would only be dying for his or her own sins. It was to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 53: 5-6, "He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Only Jesus, who was not only human but also the Son of God, was perfect, spotless, and without blemish. Thus Jesus is the sacrifice. Therefore, Good Friday is the day that makes our forgiveness possible.

2) From a legal framework for understanding our relationship with God. Our sin, our disobedience, is a crime against God. Disobedience requires punishment, or else it is not being taken seriously. Hence God must require a punishment, the payment of a price, before God can forgive our sins or crimes. Jesus is the price. The payment has been made, the debt has been satisfied. And we are freed from the sins and saved. For St. Paul, it is the demonstration of God's love for us, the sacrifice that makes our redemption possible. John 3:16 says: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

3) From the Socio-Political perspective, jealousy was one reason: Jesus was so popular among the poor peasants who were very resentful toward Roman Empire's exploitation and oppression. The Jerusalem Temple leaders were jealous. Matt. 27: 18 reports: "Pilate realized that it was out of jealousy that they handed Jesus over [for crucifixion]. Jealousy contains poison that kills.

4) False accusations: Matt. 26: 59 reports, "Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death." In Matt. 27: 13, Pilate asks Jesus, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" People were giving false testimony saying, "This fellow (Jesus) said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days"(Matt. 26:61). They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king (Luke 23:2). He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place" (Luke 23: 5). High priests accused Jesus of blasphemy and asked [the council] what is your verdict? They answered, "He deserves death" (Matt. 26:65-66).

5) Fear: There was fear of Jewish leaders who were collaborators of Roman Empire said, *"If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation".....Caiaphas, high priest that year said, "it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed"* (John 11:48-50). Even apart from Jesus' subversive message of Roman law and order, and however nonviolent it might have been, *the very presence of enthusiastic crowds listening to whatever Jesus said threatened Jewish leaders and Roman authorities as well, especially at the Passover festival when big crowd gathered in Jerusalem in the week of Passover.*

6) His passion caused his passion: Jesus' passion was about the kingdom of God. He spoke to peasants as a voice of peasant's religious protest against Roman kingdom of god. Roman emperor was considered god's son. In Jerusalem, Jesus challenged the authorities with public acts and public debates. All of the things he was passionate (love) about, God and the Kingdom of God, God and God's passion

for justice led him to his passion/suffering. Therefore, one passion (love) got him to another passion (suffering).

7) Scripture tells us that Jesus was crucified between two "bandits" (Matt. 27:38; Mark 15:27). The Greek word translated "bandits" is commonly used for guerilla fighters against Rome who were "freedom fighters." Some scholars think that Jesus was executed as a rebel in the eyes of Romans and thus it was a political execution.

The **Crowd** demanded Jesus' crucifixion and Pilate gave in. When Pilate asked, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews [that is Jesus]?" Crowd shouted, "Crucify him." So Pilate released Barabbas instead and handed Jesus over to his soldiers to be crucified. Pilate COULD spare Jesus' life because Pilate found no basis for an accusation against Jesus, but he was afraid of the crowd (Luke 23: 4, 13-25). He was such an unpopular Roman governor among Jewish people as well as to Rome, he was afraid to lose his position. He went along with the crowd's wish and ordered an execution of Jesus.

What Crowd was it that shouted to kill Jesus? Scholars think that this was not the same crowd that came with Jesus from Galilee. This was not the same crowd that was amazed at hearing Jesus during the week. Scholars think that this different crowd was brought in by chief priests. The rationale of thinking this way is that the trial was taking place in Pilate's palace. Ordinary people could not come into Pilate's palace unless an authorized personnel let them in. That must have been temple authorities. The temple authorities "stirred up the crowd to have Pilate released Barabbas for them instead" (Mark 15:11) and kill Jesus. The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed (Matt. 27: 20).

Third point: What is your understanding of Jesus death? In your homeless life have you ever felt like dying? When I served homeless women's church in Seattle downtown, I wrote a litany of death having my homeless friends in mind. I will read it for you and see if you can relate to this in any way:

Litany of Death

When we are abused, our identity dies.
When we are dominated, our self-determination dies.
When we are oppressed, our freedom dies.

When we are forced, our free-will dies.
When we are threatened, our peace dies.
When we are raped, our dignity dies.

When we are sick, our health dies.
When we are mentally disturbed, our dream dies.
When we are depressed, our joy dies.

When we are angry and hateful, our love dies.
When we fall into temptations our will-power dies.
When we hurt ourselves and others, our value dies.

When we are evicted, our home dies.
When we are hungry and thirsty, our hope dies.
When we have no resources, our future dies.
When our children are taken away, our heart dies.

When we give our body for money, our worth dies.
When we are lying and stealing, our honesty dies.
When we are messed up by drugs or alcohol, our mind dies.

When we alienate each other, our bond dies.
When our minds are narrowed, our vision dies.
When we reject ourselves, others and even God, our soul dies.
When we are homeless, our motivation dies.
When we do not love our neighbors, our salvation dies.
You might not have experienced all of these, but some of them, right?
Lastly, my Concluding question is how the death of Jesus affects your life?

Let me quote a scholar who expressed Jesus' death so profoundly. I want you to think how you are relating to this Jesus:
According to Spong,

Jesus as the person who gave all of himself for others:
When this self-giving Jesus was crucified, he refused to defend himself. When his disciples forsook him, he loved his forsakers.
When one of them denied him and he loved the denier.
When another betrayed him, he loved the betrayer.
When his enemies abused him, he loved his abusers.
When they killed him, he loved his killers.
He gave his life away even as they took it from him.
Self-giving, sacrifice, suffering, powerlessness were the marks of Jesus' life. This Jesus was in fact "a person for others."
This Jesus was the meaning of God, who is the source of life and love.
Therefore, this self-giving love was the meaning, the essence and definition of God disclosed in the person of Jesus."
This Jesus came into the world to show what the God's love and justice look like.

Anyone would like to share how do you feel about this Jesus?
Yes, Jesus died to forgive our sins. He died our death. We owe him our life.

So how would you live your life? Share your decisions about the change you are going to make or how your life will be different because Jesus died for you.

17. Jesus' Seven Words on the Cross

1. Luke 23:34: - Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."
2. Luke 23:43: - Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."
3. John 19:26-27: - Woman, here is your son..... Here is your mother."
4. Matt 27:46: - My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
5. John 19:28: - I am thirsty."
6. John 19:30: - It is finished."
7. Luke 23:46: - Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Introduction

Have you ever been in such a pain that you couldn't talk except groaning, mourning or screaming? Can you think of anything in such a situation? Once I was in an auto accident. My pain was so great that I couldn't think of anything but one thing that was, "I am dying." What do you think he was thinking on the cross in such an unbearable pain? Could he have been thinking of those three years of his ministry in Galilee? Could he have been thinking of people who were cured by him? Could he have been thinking of disciples who deserted him and ran away? Could he have been thinking of Judas, one of his disciples, who sold him for money? I don't think so. I am amazed that he was able to speak even spoke 7 words in such an unbearable pain on the cross.

If you were in such a devastating pain, what do you think you will think about? Do you think that you will condemn your killers for the eternal punishment? I don't think so according to my experience. Pain numbs your thinking.

The mighty Jesus who fed 5,000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish, the mighty Jesus who raised Lazarus from dead, the mighty Jesus who cast out all the demons, the mighty Jesus who healed all the sick including lepers, the mighty Jesus who could call angelic army and destroy Romans, carried his cross silently and accepted such cruel death on the cross. He carried our sins on his own shoulder and died on the cross for us. The process of dying by torture and hanging on the cross might have been too painful and devastating to utter anything but 7 words. Each of his 7 last words on the cross are so precious that each of them can be sermon or Bible study theme. Therefore, I am going to reflect upon his seven words briefly.

1. Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing:

Luke 23: 34.

The first word Jesus said was asking God to forgive his killers. At that moment when he was praying for forgiveness for those who deserve eternal punishment, the door of forgiveness for all humanity was open.

Peter who denied Jesus three times wept for his mistake, repented and was forgiven. Judas who sold his teacher for money felt so bad but didn't ask for forgiveness. He judged and destroyed himself by hanging.

You know we all make mistakes or commit sins. We need to ask ourselves, how do we handle our guilt feeling? Judging is not our responsibility. We are not qualified to judge anyone including ourselves. But we all do judge self and others. At times it is too painful to judge self for own mistake and blame others for it. We call it "projection." Some people feel so bad for their mistakes that they judge themselves by destroying self and others. They don't God's forgiveness. I know it is hard to forgive self. For me, it was rather easy to forgive others but not myself.

Unresolved and unforgiven guilt eats at our souls. It makes us sick, destroys our mind, and makes us dysfunctional. Research has shown that bottling up anger can lead to many health consequences, among them heart disease, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, hives, acne, psoriasis, peptic ulcer, epilepsy, migraine, Raynaud's disease, and high blood pressure and mental illness.

Yes, there is way of cleaning up our guilt. Confess to God, and ask for forgiveness. God will willingly grant us forgiveness because God is a merciful God, not a condemning God. It is important that we do not ever repeat the once-forgiven-behavior again.

Jesus' cross is a symbol of and price for forgiveness. Do you believe that? He gave his life to forgive us. Today, let us meet this Jesus who is ready to forgive us. Amen.

**2. Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise:
Luke 23: 43**

When Jesus was hung on the cross, there were two other people hanging each of Jesus' side. There was a conversation going among the three dying people on the cross. One of the criminals on the cross derided him saying, "Aren't you Messiah? Save yourself and us." But the other confessed his own sin saying "We are getting what we deserve for our deeds." He seemed to accept the consequence of his action. And he confessed Jesus' innocence saying, "He has done nothing wrong." Then he asked Jesus to **remember** him in the kingdom. He didn't ask Jesus to take him to the Kingdom, but just asked to **remember** him. Jesus responded by saying, "Today you will be **with me** in Paradise." He got an invitation into the Kingdom instead of just being remembered by Jesus. It was the reward for his confession of his sins, and acceptance of Jesus. Even

when he was dying on the cross, he was forgiving and saving sinners. It was the moment that transformed the most despising, ridiculing, cruel, painful condemning Roman imperial cross into Jesus' soul-saving cross for all humanity.

Whenever I officiated memorial service for homeless friends, I comforted their souls with these words, "In the Kingdom of God, in the Paradise, there is no more hunger, no more homelessness, no more illness, no more abandonment, no more substances, no more violence, and no more death because Jesus promised to prepare a place for us. "I'm there and you will be also" (John 14: 2-3). Therefore, in Paradise, God's eternal home, there will be no more shortage of rooms. Jesus' invitation to the paradise - Kingdom of God - is the best promise for all of us. Going into the paradise must be the reward for the way we live. The whole purpose of having faith in God and Jesus is to live justly by loving our God and our neighbor. Then we don't have to worry about where we go when we die. Rooms are already reserved for us. Let us meet this Jesus who opened the Paradise for us and invites us there when we finish our life on earth. Amen.

3. Woman, here is your son..... Here is your mother: John 19:26-27.

Calling his mother, "Woman," was an affectionate expression. Can you imagine the mother watching her beloved son's most painful death on the cross? Can you imagine her, grabbing the cross, wrestling with herself wishing to die for her son. What the son could do watching his pain-stricken mother, beating her chest and wailing beneath the cross? What could you have done if you were in his shoes? Jesus' love for his mother was so deep that he had to care for her even at his death bed. He tells mother, "John is your son from now on. Love him and depend on him." He tells John, "She is your mother from now on. Care for her and love her as I did." It was the moment John and Mary became the mother and son, a family. John cared for her from then on.

In Jesus Christ, we all are mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. In him, a new family and new community are born. In Matt. 12:48-50, when Jesus heard his family came to see him where he was teaching, he said, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, "Here are my mother and my brothers!

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." This is the reason I call our gathering "A new family and a community."

Dear friends, look around people on your right, left, front and behind. They are your new family in the Christ's community. One theologian said, "There is no other organization like a church that welcomes you as a member, prays for you and cares for you for the rest of your life."

Beginning today, we all need to treat each other as our mother, father, brother, sister, daughter, and grandchildren. Look at the one sitting next to you and call out these names - brother, sister, mother, etc.

Let us meet this Jesus who binds us in to one family relationship and his beloved community. Amen.

4. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Matt. 27:46.

Did you feel God was forsaking you when you lost your job?; when you were evicted in to the streets?; when you are sick on the streets?; when your spouses, family and friends deserted you? Yes, it might be natural for most of us to feel that way in our devastating and profoundly discouraging situation. It might be very painful experience to be forsaken by your own loved ones. Being forsaken by God would be the most devastating, most lonely, most sad, and most painful thing to experience.

However, very few Christians might cry out "My God, why have you forsaken me" when they die because we believe that we are returning to God's home. And then, how come Jesus, the son of God, did that, someone asked. I interpret his outcry of being forsaken by God at his death, as a condition that "Jesus died homeless" because there is no worse homelessness than you feel deserted by God. Someone else said because he was dying as a human being. Jesus who had no address of his own just like many of you, and facing his final moment of his life as a homeless person, he cried out the cry of all deserted homeless humanity. We confess that Jesus is 100% human and 100% God. Therefore, his cry represented all human cry that is being shouted out when we are deserted by God for our un-confessed and un-forgiven sins. It was the savior's cry for all sinners in the world. This was the outcry of Jesus Christ, the savior, who embraces all

human cry. This was the cry of Mary, who was watching her son's death and all mothers' cry who lose their sons at the hand of tyrants. This is the cry of all those who are hungry, sick and homeless, being deserted by their families, friends, churches and society.

Do you believe that God would never leave us in homelessness forever? Do you believe that the God who brought deserted, exiled Israel back home will also bring you home? Yes, God will bring you home too. Let us meet this Jesus who experienced being forsaken on our behalf and cry out our cry for us. Amen.

5. I am thirsty: John 19: 28.

He lost lots of blood and liquid from his body. This condition is called dehydration. Therefore he was thirsty. This also means the state of his acute pain. I read that dehydration causes severe pain which can result in death. This also means that Jesus has a human body and he was human. Jesus was physically thirsty to death.

But we must be thirsty for his words, his spirit, his ethics, his justice, his love and his salvation and thirsty for his cross of forgiveness.

We must not be thirsty for wealth for ourselves, but we must be thirsty to help the poor. We must not be thirsty for the blessings for ourselves but we must be thirsty to share our blessings with others.

We must be thirsty to love others more, thirsty to pray, thirsty for mission, thirsty to serve, thirsty to give and thirsty to share what we have.

Jesus said, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me"(John 7: 37). "Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6: 35). We must be thirsty for his life-giving water and be thirsty to share it with others who are thirsty.

What are you thirsty for? You might be thirsty for job and home. You might be thirsty for your family. Some might be thirsty for more education. Some might be thirsty for alcohol.

Let us meet this Jesus who makes us thirsty for love and justice.

6. It is finished: John 19: 30.

He finished with all the slanders; He finished with betrayal from his loved and trusted ones; He finished with the injustice in the Pilate court; He finished with the execution on the cross; He finished with the mission of carrying the world's sin, and He finished with giving

his own life to save the world. It was his cry of victory that he had finished his mission on earth. Our Lord Jesus finished all of the above for us.

Have you ever finished anything and experienced shouting “I am finished”? I did that when I finished my last term paper for my Masters in Social Work. I shouted “I am finished” flying down all the way from upstairs to downstairs of my home. What would you like to finish? We must start something in order to finish. If you don’t start anything anywhere there is nothing to finish. Therefore, now it is our turn to follow him. His finishing point is our beginning. So what is your beginning? If you didn't start something already, what would you like to begin with? Some people determined to begin to serve the Lord. Some people are determined to begin to serve the poor and needy. Some of you want to begin college. Some of you want to begin going to AA to achieve sobriety.

Jesus’ end was his disciples’ beginning of a new life. They began witnessing to their Lord Jesus. Disciples’ end was the beginning of the first century churches. Their end was our beginning of inheriting Jesus from them and witnessing to what we learned through scripture. Therefore, one Christian’s end will become someone else’s beginning. End and beginning is therefore, a circle which is never disconnected. The Lord Jesus was the beginning and end. He invited us into his circle of ending and beginning.

Let us meet this Jesus who is an end and a beginning for all of us and motivate us to begin anew. Amen.

7. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit: Luke 23: 46.

Have you ever thought about to whom you will commit your soul when you die? Jesus had God to commit his soul at his last breath. How discouraging it will be if we don't have anyone who welcomes our souls at our last breath, if there is no home for our souls to return to when we finish our life on earth! How fortunate we are for having God to whom we can commit our souls.

When I officiate at a funeral or memorial service for homeless brothers and sisters, including my own husband, I committed their souls into the hands of God, the warm and loving bosom of God who would protect them. I pray that they no longer experience hunger, cold,

sickness, substances, crime, or homelessness. How hopeless it could have been if I had no one whom I commit their souls to.

The risen Lord Jesus told Mary Magdalene that "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20: 17). This is affirmation that our souls have eternal home to return to just like Jesus did.

Jesus will welcome all of us into God's home. Jesus is the one who opens the way to God's home. Let us meet this Jesus who is our home for our souls to return to.

Conclusion: We reflected upon the seven words of Jesus on the cross and tried to relate them to our own life. As my conclusion, I am going to suggest that we all determine to live and die with Jesus. In Romans 6:6-7, Paul said, "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is free from sin." Can we die to our old habits, mistakes, our old thinking patterns, and life style that we may become free from all of negative, destructive life styles? Can you identify things you want to die to for your new life? Dying means living a new life and living eternally.

18. Easter Sunday Sermon:

Scripture Text: John 20: 18

Theme: I have seen the Lord

INTRODUCTION

We have talked about Jesus' last week on earth – Sunday through Friday. In other words we walked through Jesus Passion week up to his death on the cross. Today, it is Easter, when he was raised from his tomb. What does Easter mean to you?

I chose John 20:18 as my sermon text today. Let us read it together:

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

My sermon theme is "I have seen the Lord." When I founded and served the Church of Mary Magdalene, a homeless women's congregation downtown, Seattle, I chose this verse as the founding theme. When Mary Magdalene visited Jesus' grave early Sunday morning, she met the risen Jesus. Jesus told her to tell all the disciples

that he was raised from the dead. So she went out and announced, "I have seen the Lord."

Mary Magdalene was a woman who was possessed by 7 demons. I call it "multiple troubles." She was suffering from many different troubles including perhaps emotional illness. But Jesus raised her from her deadly life circumstances whatever they may have been. To help homeless women rise from their multiple troubles I named the church after her.

The Resurrection message became the founding principle of Christianity. So Easter is utterly central for Christianity. Christians believe that the cross wasn't the end for Jesus, not like thousands of Jews who were killed on the cross and have been forgotten, but not Jesus. What is the meaning of the Easter stories? Many Christians believe literally his body was raised from the dead. Many others consider the meaning of the Easter more than literal rising from the dead. I have no power to make you believe one way or the other but the power of God can do it.

Let me share with you what the Easter story means for many Christians: I hope some of you may be able to relate to that. According to some scholars,

Easter means, *God raised Jesus* from his grave and therefore *Jesus lives*. Jesus is not among the dead, but among the "living." He is a figure of *the present*, not simply of the past. This is the central affirmation of Easter.

The Easter story affirms that *God has vindicated Jesus*. Easter is God's "YES" to Jesus and God's "NO" to the powers which killed him. Easter is the reversal of Good Friday. It means God's vindication of Jesus' passion for the kingdom of God; for God's justice.

Easter is about *God* even as it is about Jesus. *Jesus has been raised* (NRSV) by God. God (not Jesus himself) caused the resurrection. God did it! Resurrection is God's answer, "I did not forsake you" to Jesus' cry, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15: 34).

Post-Easter affirmation is *Jesus is the Lord*. Remember that Roman emperor claimed to be the lord and son of God? Anybody who protested against this power was put to death. Therefore, the Easter

message is that the Roman emperor or any other domination system is not the lord but *Jesus alone is the Lord*.

It was *Jesus of Nazareth* who was put to death. It was *Jesus of Nazareth* who was raised. There is no other Christ of faith who is not *Jesus of Nazareth*.

Jesus is *the crucified one*. There is no risen one who is not the *crucified one*.

Without *crucifixion* there is no resurrection. *The crucified one* by the Roman Empire is raised.

Easter means personal born-again for us all as well as political justice. Remember that the disciples were devastated, discouraged, disappointed, filled with fear, abandoned and disowned Jesus? But after seeing Jesus' resurrection they all found courage, hope and new life. The cowardly disciples all came back together and began to witness to Jesus' resurrection. This time they risked their lives, not running away, denying or forsaking Jesus. Anyone who said Jesus was the Lord, Son of God not the Roman Emperor was at the risk of losing his life. But disciples did. Three days ago they had all ran away. Three days later they all came back being ready to risk their own lives. Aren't you amazed at this change? How could that be possible? We can call it "salvation." Jesus gave his life to save personal souls or humanity from sins. So there is powerful personal meaning to Lent, Holy Week, Good Friday, and Easter.

Easter also sees the human problem as injustice and the solution as God's justice. The just world is God's dream, a world being grounded deeply in God's heart of justice. Passion for such a Kingdom of God got Jesus killed by an unjust imperial power. But God has vindicated Jesus.

Therefore, Easter disclosed Jesus' passion for compassion, justice, and nonviolence. Compassion is utterly central to the message and life of Jesus. Justice is the social form of compassion. Compassion is based in love.

Love is the soul of justice, and justice is the body of love. All of this is what Easter, the ultimate climax of Holy Week, is about.

Holy Week and the journey of Lent are about an alternative procession.

Remember that there were two processions on the Palm Sunday when Jesus entered Jerusalem? One was Pilate's procession which was a show of power of the Roman Empire. The alternative procession was Jesus' procession on a donkey accompanied by peasants from Galilee, which was an anti-imperial procession. The alternative journey is the path that leads to journeying with the risen Jesus.

We are not just celebrating Easter that took place several thousand years ago. We want to experience Easter as Mary Magdalene experienced. Jesus raised her from her multiple deadly life situations. She was with him through all his mission trips, teaching, trial, suffer, death and resurrection. She was honored to be the first to see the risen Lord, the first to be commissioned to carry the good news and the first to announce "I have seen the Lord." I developed the homeless women church in Seattle naming it " Church of Mary Magdalene" to help women rise to a new life as Mary Magdalene did.

We want to relate the Easter to our own lives. Easter means that Jesus always lives with us, and in us whether you like it or not. We can't take his presence out of our hearts and souls.

Easter is God's "No" to all the unjust powers even in our world. Easter is God's "NO" to your poverty, unemployment and homelessness. Easter is God's "YES" for your new life. Easter is God's answer to your cry. Easter is the proof that God is with us always.

Easter is an invitation to Galilee to meet Jesus again just as he met his disciples in Galilee. Countless believers throughout the centuries have accepted the call to "meet Jesus in Galilee": Dr. Schweitzer too went to Galilee in Africa to meet Jesus. Mother Teresa went to Galilee in India to meet Jesus. You are the contemporary Galileans who are victims of economic crises and injustice. All of us, volunteers, are here in contemporary Galilee to meet Jesus with you.

The political meaning of Easter in our world is seeing the homeless problem as injustice and the solution must come based on God's justice. The world God wants is the world where everyone has enough to eat and home to live in. Our political system must see this. Easter

always asks us which procession are we in. Do you want to stand with Jesus? We are all invited to this journey of death and resurrection with Jesus. Easter means your rising from your own devastation and death to a new changed life - salvation. God will help us. Do you all want to rise?

I wrote a litany of rising in thinking of my homeless brothers and sisters, which is an alternative procession we can march in with Jesus. I hope this Easter may bring you rebirth and rising as Mary Magdalene experienced. I hope you can announce shouting "I have seen the Lord." Let us now read the litany together.

Litany of Rising

Leader: Jesus Christ rises from the dead:

People: We rise from our own death.

Leader: We rise to our pride.

People: We rise to our identity.

Leader: We rise to our dignity.

People: We rise to our worth.

Leader: We rise to our freedom

People: We rise to our courage.

Leader: Jesus Christ rises from the dead:

People: We rise to our peace.

Leader: We rise to our health.

People: We rise to our sobriety.

Leader: We rise to our equality.

People: We rise to our hopes.

Leader: Jesus Christ rises from the dead:

People: We rise to our joy.

Leader: We rise to our dreams.

People: We rise to our vision.

Leader: We rise to our love.

People: We rise to our opportunity.

Leader: Jesus Christ rises from the dead:

People: We rise to our potential.

Leader: We rise with our children.

People: We rise to our homes.
Leader: We rise to our life.
People: We rise to our salvation
ALL: With Jesus Christ, we all rise.
We rise like a bird.
We rise like a bread.
We rise like a balloon.
We rise like a kite.
We rise like a tide.
We rise like a sun.
We rise like a fire.

ALL: AMEN, AMEN, AMEN

19. Emmaus Road

Scripture: Luke 24: 13-35

Sermon theme: Emmaus Road

INTRODUCTION

Two weeks ago, we talked about the appearance of the post-resurrection Jesus to Mary Magdalene. Today, we are going to talk about the appearance of post-resurrection Jesus on the Emmaus Road. Four people including a narrator are going to represent four characters who share conversation on the road to Emmaus. They will read the story from Luke 24:13-33. Four readers, please come forward to the microphone. Congregation, listen very carefully. We are going to discuss this story after hearing the reading of the text.

Narrator: Now on that same day, [the first day of the week], two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.¹⁷ And he said to them,

Jesus "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?"

Narrator: They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him,

Cleopas: "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

Jesus: ¹⁹ "What things?"

Cleopas, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.

Cleopa's wife: ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

Cleopas: ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.

Cleopa's wife: ²² "Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it was just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

Jesus: ²⁵ "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Narrator ²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying,

Cleopas: "*Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.*"

Cleopa's wife: [Yes, stay with us please! It's going to be dark pretty soon]

Cleopas and Cleopa's wife [together: Please!!! Please go with us !!!]

Narrator: So he went in to stay with them.³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.³² They said to each other,

Cleopas : *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"*

Narrator: ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

Thank you, readers. You have done a good job. Now let us reflect on the story.

It was late Sunday afternoon, the day Jesus was raised from the dead. Cleopas and his wife seem to be members of Jesus' inner group. This weary couple was returning home to Emmaus from Jerusalem. It was about 7 miles distance. In those days, people walked. Even today, some of us can walk that distance. They heard about Jesus' rising from his dead. But they weren't sure what to make of it since they hadn't seen the risen Christ, and it could have been a rumor or gossip. The resurrection story they heard in Jerusalem didn't seem real. In fact, they could have been extremely upset, stressed out and exhausted being in Jerusalem on that week-end while Jesus was crucified. So this trip back home could have been a fatigued and confused one for them. A couple of points we can make here:

Our first point is that for the couple, "the Emmaus Road" was a journey of profound disappointment, hopelessness, despair, confusion, and exhaustion. They had just lost the most important leader in their life. Has anyone been on such an Emmaus Road in your life? Would anyone like to share?

Our second point is that this couple encountered a stranger on their Emmaus Road. Jesus approached them but they did not recognize him.

42 years ago, my Emmaus journey in the U.S. started in St. Louis, MO. I met a nice clergy family who were total strangers to me. But the couple helped me a lot to resettle. They were my Jesus. For the past 42 years we kept our friendship. Have you ever encountered a stranger on your Emmaus Road and later recognized him as Jesus?

Our third point is that this couple offered the stranger a warm hospitality. The stranger wanted to go on with his trip. But the couple persuaded him to go home with them because evening was near. The couple made time for Jesus by inviting him in. The implication is that had they not made time for him with an extra effort, he would have gone on. Jesus did not intrude. They had to press him by saying, "Please come in. It's late. Don't go on. We want you to eat with us and stay with us tonight."

Our fourth point is that the couple prepared a dinner for the guest. It was their warm hospitality. The guest turned into a host by giving thanks, blessing and breaking and sharing the bread with the couple. Whose practice was it? Yes, it was Jesus' practice while he was with disciples for three years. The couple remembered that, and recognized Jesus!

Have you ever shared what you have with others, or invited anyone in, and then the guests became a host who brought you a blessing? What happens when you eat with a stranger? When I eat with a stranger, my eyes and hearts are open to that person and vice versa. And we become friends right away.

Our fifth point is what they did in the end? Yes, they ran back to Jerusalem to share this news of meeting risen Christ. What good news did you share with others lately? Do you share your good news about Jesus or God?

Our concluding remarks can be:

Firstly, we all experience Emmaus Road: Our Emmaus Road can be sad and hopeless. Or Emmaus Road can be just a life journey. Often

Jesus is walking with us but we don't recognize him. He knocks on our hearts but we don't open the door for him, because we are not ready. When we are not ready, Christ cannot come in. Our life together here every Friday can be our Emmaus journey. Perhaps Christ tries to enter into your life through our worship service and dinner. But many of you may not open the door for him. I hope it won't take too long to open your door for him.

Secondly, we must persuade, press and keep calling Jesus to come in. One scholar suggested that we must constrain him to come in. He suggests us to take time every day, five minutes or fifteen minutes, just to say, "Lord, I'm setting this time aside. I constrain You to come in and spend time with me." If we don't, he goes on without bothering us, for he does not intrude.

Thirdly, when he comes in to our heart as our guest, he will change into our host. He will break bread and share it with us and bless us.

Fourthly, we become a witness to what he has done for us. We will share this good news with others.

Lastly, the couple's trip from Jerusalem to Emmaus was slow and hopeless. But their trip back to Jerusalem was in haste and hopeful. Likewise, once you welcome Jesus in your heart and life, your life will become joyful and hopeful no matter what kind of life circumstance you may be in. If you agree, all God's people shout Amen three times. "Amen, Amen, Amen."

20. Father's Day Sermon

Scripture: Ps. 103: 13

Theme: Father's compassion

This time of year, in the third week end of June, we celebrate Father's Day. I chose Bible verse from Ps. 103:13. Let us all read it together: *As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.*

I am sure those of you who are somebody's children might be angry and grieving for something your father had done to you. If some of you are fathers you might be grieving for how badly your children treat you or what you have done to your children. I too have something

I regret about for not doing enough for my parents and my children. You might also be grieving, as fathers or as children, for not being with your loved ones this time of the year. For some people father's day is not a good day at all with mixed emotion of love and hate.

But I know that all of you, who are fathers, love your children no matter what. I also know that your children love you no matter what and how you are. I also know that your fathers love you regardless of what you did to them. I know that you love your fathers regardless of what they did to you.

Ps. 103: 3 says, "As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for us." Bible recognizes father's God-given love and compassion. There is no bad father. All fathers are loving fathers. Some fathers just do not know how to love. You, who are fathers, know this.

Let me share with a story I read in Korean newspaper many years ago. This story is stuck in my soul ever since. It was a real story that made the national news. One hot summer day, a young father and 6 years old son went to beach. Neither one was able to swim. So they decided to ride on a rubber boat. While they were enjoying the ride on the water, a sudden surf engulfed their boat and both of them were thrown into the sea. As they couldn't reach their boat, the father quickly picked the child up and put him on his shoulder. Water was deep, up to his neck. Father tried to stand on the sand firmly. He tried to call for help but no one seemed to hear them. His feet were sinking deeper and deeper into the sands. Salty sea water began to creep in to his mouth and nose. As deeper his feet were sinking into the sand, more water was reaching his whole face. He gathered up all of his might in his feet, legs and his arm to hold the child up. He was standing at a devastating life and death moment. He couldn't breathe any longer in the water, and his feet were no longer holding him up. Can you imagine how could he breathe and drink the salt water at the same time? His love for his child gave him the strength and power to hold on. At that critical moment, help arrived and got them out to the shore. Father passed out on the sand. Helpers tried to revive him with no success. But the child was saved by the father's frantic fight for his life. What

do you say about this story? Yes, that father loved his son so much that he gave his own life. Ps. 103: 3 says, "As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for us."

There is no father who doesn't love his children. All of your fathers love you as you love your own children. If your father didn't seem to love you, can you forgive him? If your children don't seem to love you, can you forgive them? Wouldn't you want them to forgive you too? On father's day, can you call your fathers or your children or see them in person, if possible? Can you tell them "You love them very much?" Or can you tell them, "You forgive them" or ask their forgiveness for you?

As fathers love their children, God loves us. Can we confess that Jesus loved us so much that Jesus gave his own life for us, as this father in my story sacrificed his life for his child? Can we live our lives by constantly confessing that we live by Jesus' giving his life for us as this child will live the rest of his life by confessing "I live because of my dad's sacrifice for me." May God bless you on this Father's Day. All God's people say, AMEN.

21. Are you healthy?

Scripture Texts: Gen. 1:27-28; John 3:16; I Cor. 3:16-17.

INTRODUCTION

One day, I had a lunch with a nurse friend, who is operating a small family home for Alzheimer's patients. She said that most of them lost their memories and couldn't recognize their own children. They replayed their early trauma, which had been buried deep in their hearts. One woman wouldn't eat because she remembered her early days when her children were hungry. She insisted that she had to feed them first.

She and I wondered what we will replay if we ever arrived at that stage. We said to each other, "It is very scary to NOT know what we will replay. And we don't want to replay our past painful memories." We also shared our experience seeing many people live in their old memory of trauma even while they are still younger than us. We concluded that in order not to replay our traumatic experience, not to live in our old memory of trauma, we must overcome our past pain and experience and arrive at a complete healing NOW. We must be

free from all of hang-ups. This conversation motivated me to prepare my sermon today on our spirituality and health issues with my sermon theme, “Are you healthy?” I chose Scripture text from several books; Gen. 1:27-28; John 3:16; I Cor. 3:16-17. Let us read them together:

Gen 1: 27-28: So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

I Cor. 3:16-17: Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.

I want to make a few points.

My first point is about spirituality. According to Dr. Obrien, “Spirituality” has to do with the spirit, sacred values, and religious matters. Some call that Spirit, Transcendent Being or Higher Being.” Human beings are known to be spiritually yearning to be connected to the Higher being in order to be protected. In Christianity, we call this Transcendent Being “God”. Therefore, Christian spirituality has to do with our relationship with God. According to Dr. Obrien, the 2005 Newsweek Poll found that 79% of Americans described themselves as “spiritual.” Almost two thirds of Americans say they pray every day, nearly a third meditate every day and 44% said they attend church every week. I am sure that all of you would consider yourselves “spiritual,” right?

Dr. Obrien’s article also reported that Cardiac and AIDS patients benefited from intercessory prayer. Stroke victims were able to handle their disabilities better through prayer. The elderly who independently prayed, meditated, or studied Bible were more likely to live longer than those who didn’t. People were less likely to be depressed if they believed in a power greater than themselves and perceived that their lives had meaning. The person has a negative relationship with spirituality can potentially make health outcomes worse. He reported that relaxation response in repetitive prayer, or other “mindful

practices” show physiological changes including slowing metabolism, breathing, and heart rate, reduction of muscle tension, and lowered blood pressure.

My second point is that we need to define “health” to understand the relationship between spirituality and health. Many of us would say we are healthy if we are not under any medical treatment. Would you all consider yourself healthy? The World Health Organization (WHO) defines "health" as *a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being*. Dr. Stuart J. Kingman, the former Director of Christian Medical Commission of the World Council of Churches presented the church's definition of "health" as *a state of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being: a state of being harmony with each other, with natural environment and with God*.

On the basis of the church's inclusive definition of health, how many of us can say we are physically, emotionally, economically, politically, and socially healthy, and are in harmony with each other, with natural environment and with God? Quite often we are not in harmony with our own selves!! Right?

My third point is how we understand illness. Herbert Benson, MD, indicated that 60-90 percent of all visits to medical offices are for stress-related symptoms or illness. According to the biomedical model, most disease is viewed as physical invasion from outside the human organism. Patients are viewed as helpless victim of external and unpredictable disease process and the individual's emotional, spiritual, social, economic and political aspect are completely ignored.

But according to the church's definition of health, when we experience brokenness from any of the physical, emotional, spiritual, economic, political, social well-being, and broken harmony with each other, with nature, and with God, we experience loss of health. Where are you with this notion? Are you ill?

How about homelessness and health issue? Poverty and hunger cause the loss of health. Fear, hopelessness and helplessness cause the loss of health. Loss of jobs, families and homes causes the loss of health. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse causes the loss of health. Absence of security, love, peace and justice causes the loss of health. Guilt, grief, anger, hatred and low-self-esteem cause the loss of health.

Alcohol and drug abuse definitely damage health. All forms of mental illness means loss of health. Alienation, racism, sexism, classism, militarism, nationalism, and war cause the loss of personal and social health.

Homelessness can cause people to lose their health. According to the above definitions, do any of you feel that you are NOT healthy? Yes, it is very difficult to be healthy in this day and age, especially in a homeless situation.

My fourth point is a questions as to how can Christian spirituality help us to be healthy? According to the creation account in Genesis 1: 27, God created man and woman in God's own image, and not in an animal's image. God blessed them equally. Therefore, we are precious sons and daughters of God. We start our lives in a parent-child relationship with God and in the image of God. Without God, our existence is meaningless. It has no purpose. Without human beings in it, God's creation of the world is incomplete. Only in relation to God, are we "somebody" and we are given identity, dignity and pride. Therefore, we must be happy and healthy in relationship with God (spirituality). This is number one principle for our health.

In John 3:16, God so loved the world, you and me, that God came in to the world in Jesus Christ. President of the United States didn't come down to see you on the street. Your Governor didn't come down to see you on the streets. But God in Jesus came down to meet us in the streets, where you are, because you are God's children. There God in Jesus has taken residence in our midst. Therefore, in our relationship with God (spirituality) we must be proud of ourselves be happy and healthy.

God came in to the world but where is God's dwelling place? Is God residing in the White House as our President's guest? Is God residing at the Marriot Hotel? According to I Corinthians 3:16 God resides in us; it says we are the temple of God's spirit. This means that God dwells in our hearts and souls. Whether you recognize or not, God lives in our hearts as our host and guest. We must be proud of being the home and host for God. Therefore, we must be happy and healthy in relation to this God (spirituality). This is also) number one principle for our health.

The above three passages give us the following prescriptions to recover our health:

1) We are in intimate relationship with Jesus in God. We are in God. God is in us. Therefore, we are required to clean up our house to welcome Jesus as our guest. We are required to take care of ourselves because our heart is God's dwelling place. It has to be clean with no odor. Is your heart clean for God to dwell in?

2) We have a hope and pride as God's guests and host. We have God on our side. We have a profound source of health and healing in God. Therefore, we must be happy and healthy because God wants us to be healthy and happy. That is the blessing.

3) We must restore the relationship with ourselves, with God, with our families, with our friends and with our society if we want to be healthy. In order to do that, we must accept the truth that God created us in God's image, God came to us, and God resides in us. This is the profound ground of healing. Don't let that go.

4) Therefore, we cannot abuse our body and soul by filling it up with junk food, anger, hatred, resentment, wounds, hurt, and doubts. We must clean them all out of our hearts.

Then in the relationship with God (spirituality) we will experience total healing in the holistic sense as God's blessing. This is the Christian spirituality we believe in. This Christian spirituality can bring us good health if we do our homework as prescribed above. Do you believe in all these? If you do, all God's people say, AMEN.

22. Are you possessed by demons?

Scripture text: Mark 1:32-34a

Introduction

We have been talking about spirituality and health with a question, "are we all healthy?" How did we define spirituality? Does anybody remember it?

1. Some scholars describe "spirituality" in a different way.

William Stringfellow, Episcopal lay leader presents many faces spirituality;

the practice of mind control, yoga discipline, multifarious pious exercises, intensive journals, meditation, jogging, cults, wilderness sojourns, political resistance, contemplation, abstinence, hospitality, a vocation of poverty, non-violence, silence, the efforts of prayer.

Bernard McGinn gives three definitions: 1) Anthropological Definitions that focuses exclusively on *human* spirit. Spirituality is seen as an element in human nature, a depth-dimension of human existence. 2) Theological definition perceives that true spirituality happens only when human spirit and divine spirit are connected. There is no spirituality without [the big] “Spirit.” 3) Here the spirituality is understood by one’s relationship to a community of faith. Thus, we can understand our spirituality by our relationship to this worshipping community you belong.

Sandra Schneiders defines Christian spirituality as “the conscious striving for self-integration toward the God who is revealed in Jesus and is presented as Spirit in and through the community of faith, the church.”

Historical-Contextual Definitions are rooted in a particular community’s history and experience. Historical-contextual definitions recognize that we are socially located and that this social location gives meaning and purpose to human life. For example, the black church tradition in the U.S. sees spirituality as having a distinctive connection to the struggle for social justice.

Women are seeking an understanding of spirituality that is distinctive to the context of women and that takes seriously women’s historical struggle for liberation. So you can see spirituality has many dimensions. But we will focus on Christian spirituality.

Today I chose our text from Mark 1:32-34a. Let us read it together;

32 That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered around the door. 34 And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons;

From this text, our theme is “Are you possessed by demons?”

2. As we read from Mark, the whole city gathered around Jesus to heal their

sick people. They must have had a strong faith that they could be healed if they came to Jesus. Why didn't they go to doctors or hospitals? In those days, majority of people were poor and couldn't afford Doctors. They heard Jesus healed at no cost. So, they all came to Jesus.

In the ancient times, there were no medical terms that we have today such as mental illness, cancer, alcoholism, diabetes, depression, schizophrenia, etc. They understood diseases as “demon possessed;” some bad spirit attacked our body. Demon-possession was also understood as judgment from God. They were treated as sinful, unclean and ugly; they were despised and alienated from the whole community and condemned to social death. Therefore, they were already dead before their final death.

Jesus’ healing of the demon-possessed was *de-demonization*. Jesus’ healing meant that they were not demon-possessed anymore, and thus deserved to be free from diseases. Some scholars view that Jesus’ exorcism was the dawn of the lordship of the divine life. The lordship of God drives out of creation the powers of destruction, which are demons and idols, and heals the created beings who have been damaged by them.

Some scholars would say that if the kingdom of God is coming as Jesus proclaimed, then salvation is coming as well. If salvation comes to the whole creation, then the health of all created beings is the result – health of the body and soul, individual and community, human beings and nature.

Therefore, healing and exorcism must be viewed in relation to Jesus’ messianic mission. When the doctor comes, the sick appear, when the messiah comes, the demons and idols have to disappear from the earth, because God desires to dwell in it.

Unclean spirits recognized Jesus as the Son of God as stated in Luke 4:40-41 and the Gospel reports the demons saying ‘you have come to destroy us’ in Mark. 1:24.

German theologian Moltmann views the demons as forces which are destructive of life. They enslave men and women, and make them dependent. They destroy the personality and derange the organism. They are characterized by their pleasure in ‘tormenting.’ They rouse the death-wish in human beings.

Can anyone relate to this notion? Are any of you enslaved by something? I am enslaved by work. I can't stop working. I never learned how to play. Too much work has been destructive to my health.

Some people are enslaved by greed. Greedy people use all possible ways to accumulate wealth from hard work to exploiting others. Harvard professor Kawachi would say that modern people are enslaved by shopping disorder- compulsive shopping, competitive shopping, and revenge shopping.

Has anyone experienced these three kinds of shopping? Especially, revenge shopping? Often, when women are angry at their husbands, they go revenge shopping. I experienced revenge shopping while I was traveling between Seattle and Baltimore. Delay by a tornado in Baltimore made us miss the connection of the flight in Minneapolis. We had to stay at hotel for one night at our expense and came home the next day. While waiting at the airport I did revenge shopping. I bought a travel bag in purple color that ordinarily I wouldn't buy due to the high cost. But I did buy it. It was certainly a revenge shopping.

Some people are enslaved by various diseases - physical and mental and emotional. Some people are enslaved by poverty and homelessness. Some people are enslaved by anger and hatred. There are too many things that keep us in bondage. We can't seem to get out of them. They all affect our health. They make us sick. So are we demonized?

Whenever Jesus drives out demons from possessed people, he was de-demonizing and these people were restored to health. How can we be de-demonized from all of that enslaves us? How can we become free from our sickness? Does anyone have an answer?

How were people healed in Jesus' time in the story of Mark that we read? What did they do? They didn't do a thing except they came to Jesus believing he will cure them. That's all they did. You all may come to Jesus. Not just physically come here and sit. But come with faith that you will be free from your own sickness or troubles. That faith and trust in Jesus is the power of healer. Come and believe that you will be healed. When you find hope and joy in Jesus for being here that is the power of healer. This is the meaning of Christian spirituality which brings us health.

May God bless you all to be healed. All God's people say, Amen.

23. **Anger and health**

Scripture Texts: Gen. 4: 8, Prov. 29:11, Eph. 4:26-27, James 1:19-21:

Last week we talked about demons that enslave us. There are many demons that destroy our health. Today we will talk about one of them, a popular one that destroys our health. Let us read our Bible texts from Gen. 4: 8, Prov. 29:11, Eph. 4:26-27, and James 1:19-21:

Gen. 4:8: Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go out to the field.* And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

Prov. 29:11: A fool gives full vent to anger, but the wise quietly holds it back.

Eph. 4:26-27: ²⁶Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not make room for the devil. ³¹Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice

James 1:19-21: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.

From these texts, what could be our theme today? Anybody has any idea?

Yes, Anger is another demon.

Recently we read newspaper articles about an angry husband who shot his wife to death and he shot himself too and died. Often times Anger, if handled right, can be very useful emotion but it can be demon if we don't handle it right.

I am going to make a few points from our texts:

First point what you do with your anger? Anger appears to have been with us from the beginning of the human family. Cain and Abel were the first sons of Adam and Eve, the first family on earth according to Christian Bible. Cain and Abel both offered their fruits to

the Lord. Cain offered God crops from his land. Abel who liked hunting offered God some of his animals. God favored Abel's offering over Cain's. Cain was angry toward God who didn't approve his offerings. But he directed his anger to a wrong party, Abel didn't do anything wrong. Cain didn't control his burning anger boiling inside him. He suggested his brother to go out to the field. Cain meditated the idea to take his brother to an isolated place so that no one will see his action. He thought no one was around. He didn't realize God was everywhere. He killed his innocent brother, Abel. It was premeditated murder. He paid his price. He was thrown out of his land into homelessness.

There are several interpretations about God's favor and disliking about the two offerings: Some say God liked animal far better than crops. Some say God didn't like Cain's attitude of bringing offering. But that is not the point here. The point we like to make is how Cain should handle his anger? Was killing his brother only way to resolve it? If that is true we will kill half of our human race because we are angry every day.

What could Cain have done instead of killing his brother? Would you like to put your idea in here?

Yes, there could have been several ways; first he could ask God why God wasn't happy with his offering and he could correct whatever God pointed out or suggested. Or he could talk to his brother how his pride was hurt or talk to his parents, Adam and Eve about it. Or he could hit his punching bag a few times and get over with it.

Well, even if he resolved his anger this way, he would repeat the same offering the same way next time around, then God would favor his brother's offering again, if he didn't learn why God was not happy with his offering. Therefore, the solution could be finding out why God wasn't satisfied with his offering and correct it. If that was matter of offering itself, he should change his offering. If it was his attitude he should have changed it by learning about his own behavior. One thing clear is that he didn't do anything about the matter and didn't control his emotion of rage and committed a crime of murder.

Our second point is learning about the effect of anger: From the story of Cain and Abel we learned already that anger is a demon that destroys our health. It also kills others just as Cain did.

According to medical doctors, a physiological reaction goes with anger; the common reactions associated with chronic anger include muscle tension, flushing (redness of the face), chills, and shudders, prickly sensations, numbness, choking, twitching, losing self-control, or feeling hot or cold, fatigue, teeth clenching, pain in the neck or jaw, ringing in the ears, lowered skin temperature, excessive sweating, hives, acne, itching, severe headache, migraine headache, belching, hiccupping, peptic ulcers, chronic indigestion, diarrhea, constipation, intestinal cramping, loss of appetite (without accompanying weight loss), and frequent colds.

What kind of symptoms do you experience when you are angry? In my case, I get a pain in my neck. Have you ever known anger results in this many reactions in our body? Amazing! Aren't they?

One of the major physiological effects of anger is the release of chemicals and hormones, principally adrenaline and nor-adrenaline. According to Tavis, 'Adrenaline and nor-adrenaline are what provide the *feeling* of a feeling; that tingle, arousal, excitement, energy. The adrenal hormones act on all organs of the body reached by the sympathetic nervous system, stimulating the heart, dilating coronary vessels, constricting blood vessels in the intestines, and shutting off digestion. That is why when you are excited, scared, furious, or wildly in love, you don't want to eat. When the release of adrenaline and nor-adrenaline is chronic or prolonged, resulting in chronic or prolonged anger, some of the most serious effects are high blood pressure, headache, heart attack, stroke, and kidney problems. Therefore, the result of repressed, chronic, or prolonged anger can be devastating. And say researchers, if there's enough anger, almost any part of the body can be harmed. The effects can be as serious as cancer and heart disease or as minor (but annoying) as the common cold or skin disorders. Therefore, can you say, anger is a demon that destroys our health?

3. **Our third point** is what is the prescription to kill the germ of this demon, called anger? Again, ancient people also realized that this uncontrolled emotion caused lots of problems. **Proverbs 29:11** suggests that a fool gives full vent to anger, but the wise quietly holds it back. I know someone whose full blown anger caused someone brain damage and served long term prison sentence. In **Eph. 4:26-27** **Paul** acknowledges the need to be angry at times but urges not to dwell

on it beyond sun-down. If you get angry, do not take it to your dinner table. It will spoil the whole dinner of the whole family. The verse says, “Be angry but do not sin.” Uncontrolled anger, like Cain’s will make a person sin. Paul suggests that we not make room for the devil.³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice/hatred. James gives us another prescription in **James 1:19-21**, to shut up and listen first, take time to speak and respond, with a couple of deep breaths, which will slow down your anger; ²⁰for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness.

We don’t say you should never get angry. Yes, we can be angry. But control it. When I was really angry with my employer many years ago who discriminated me with regard to my pay or wages, instead of getting angry, I enrolled in St. Louis University and earned my Masters in Social Work. Ever since then I was able to find a good paying job. I always say my Master’s degree was by product of my anger.

As our conclusion, let us read the prescription given by our scriptures:

Prov. 29:11: A fool gives full vent to anger, but the wise quietly holds it back.

Eph. 4:26-27: ²⁶Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not make room for the devil.³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice

James 1:19-21: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness. If you all determine to take this medicine as prescribed all God’s people say, AMEN.

24. Drunk with alcohol or the Holy Spirit

Prov. 23:31-35 Eph. 5:18-20

INTRODUCTION:

When I worked at Harborview Mental Health Hospital I happened to treat a patient who was diagnosed “alcohol-induced Psychosis.” His

brain was so damaged by alcohol that he couldn't even walk straight, talk straight or think straight. He was hearing voices and was delusional. His case was worse than pure mental illness such as schizophrenia because it included brain damage. He used to be a high ranking Boeing staff who owned a luxurious home, an airplane, a yacht, expensive cars, and also had a wife and children. But his alcoholism made him lose all of the above he owned including his mind. His wife divorced him.

I also feel heartache to see so many of our members suffer from alcoholism. My deep love and care about them motivated me to reach the scripture text and to prepare my sermon from Prov. 23:31-35 and Eph. 5:18-20. Let us read them together:

Prov. 23:31-35 warns that ³¹ *Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.* ³² *At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.* ³³ *Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind utter perverse things.* ³⁴ *You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.* ³⁵ *'They struck me', you will say, 'but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.*

Eph. 5:18-20: ¹⁸Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, ²⁰giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those scripture texts gave me a theme, “drunk with alcohol or the Holy Spirit”: **Let us make a few points:**

First let us talk about drinking alcohol: Perhaps some of you who enjoy drinking might be able to preach this sermon better than I who never drinks. The story of ex-BOEING staff is an extreme case. Inpatient treatment stopped him drinking but we couldn't restore his brain damage. So you and I know many people who won't stop drinking but we also see many friends who stop drinking and maintain sobriety. Some of you might have experienced both ways. Some were able to stop drinking after meeting Jesus. These experiences motivated me to study about alcoholism. I learned that alcohol has done serious harm to human body and mind. Some people say a drink in the evening will help with good sleep, etc.

Koreans would say about alcoholism as follows: At first, a person drinks alcohol. Then, alcohol drinks alcohol. And finally, alcohol drinks a person.

Experts claim that alcoholism is drinking alcoholic beverages at a level that interferes with physical health, mental health, and social, family, or job responsibilities. Alcoholism is a type of drug addiction. There is both physical and mental dependence on alcohol. Many of you know about this better than I.

Experts point out alcohol-related illnesses; memory lapses (blackouts) after drinking episodes; withdrawal symptoms when alcohol use is stopped; the incidence of alcohol intake and related problems is rising. Data indicate that about 15% of people in the United States are problem drinkers. Some other symptoms of alcoholism includes abdominal pain, drinking alone, episodes of violence with drinking, hostility when confronted about drinking, lack of control over drinking, being unable to stop or reduce alcohol intake, making excuses to drink, nausea and vomiting, need for daily or regular alcohol use to function, neglecting to eat, not caring for physical appearance, numbness and tingling, secretive behavior to hide alcohol use, shaking in the morning, etc.

Our modern day health professionals describes the effect of alcoholism on our health: Alcohol affects the central nervous system as a depressant. This leads to a decrease in activity, anxiety, inhibitions and tension. So drunken person spit out hidden stuff deep in unconscious level. Even a few drinks can change behavior, slow motor skills, and decrease the ability to think clearly. Alcohol can impair concentration and judgment. Alcohol addicted persons can experience jaundice, enlarged liver, a fatty liver that is the accumulation of fat in the liver. Alcoholism could also result in inflammation of the liver (alcoholic hepatitis) and/or scarring (alcoholic cirrhosis). If drinking continues, these conditions will cause cirrhosis of the liver - hardening of the liver. When the scar tissue develops to a certain point, the liver can no longer do its work. The liver performs more than 1,500 functions for the body, including more than 300 life-saving procedures. If the liver stops doing its job, all kinds of health problems develop quickly and death can come rapidly. There are many more damaging effects of alcohol on physical, emotional, social and family health.

Secondly, The Bible tells us about the danger of alcoholism.

The author of Proverb wrote the truth by saying that alcohol goes down your throat smoothly. But at last it bites you like a serpent, and stings like an adder.³³Your eyes will see strange things [which means hallucination], and your mind utter perverse things [which means delusion].³⁴ *You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.* ³⁵ *'They struck me', you will say, 'but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it.* It talks about intoxicated, psychotic, delusional and numb state caused by alcohol; *When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.* The author also points out that hangover and withdrawal symptoms when you wake up make you feel the need to have another drink. Here the bite of a serpent represents serious and even fatal impact of alcoholism on human physical and mental health, such as liver damage and alcohol induced psychosis.

Thirdly the scripture text from Eph. 5:18-20 urges us not to drink and offers us prescription for healing. That is filled with the Spirit. What happens when you are drunk with Spirit? The text says, we end up singing hymns and spiritual songs among ourselves. We sing and make melody to the Lord giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the treatment plan our Bible offers us. The biblical people didn't know our modern alcohol treatment but they knew better way to prevent or treat the addiction. Positive Psychology proves what the Bible is saying is true by reporting a number of research findings about the psychological and medical benefits of music:

Increased happiness, lessen stress, reduced depressive symptoms, greater autonomy, and increased competence, hope, and optimism. Music offers an easy, natural way to relieve anxiety, increase alertness, feel happier, sharpen memory, improve mood, and fight off insomnia, depression and even addictions, without any side effects. Research shows that children who are involved with music programs grow up to have lower rates of addictive behaviors, better academic performance, and greater preparedness for college and the work force. Music making (playing an instrument or singing) is a multimodal activity that involves the integration of auditory and sensorimotor processes. Music listening can enhance the emotional and cognitive functioning of patients affected by various neurological conditions. Intensive singing practice can lead to long-

lasting effect in both the cardiovascular and pulmonary problems. Because the act of singing requires long, repeated contractions of various respiratory muscles, this type of training may help to preserve the maximal expiratory pressure of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Several studies show the result that singing reduced the frequency of stuttering by over 90%. Research has shown that singing has been shown to produce improvements in chronic stroke patients. Studies have described the positive effects of singing on the development of speech in children with autism. Singing reduces the risk of heart disease. They also found that combination of physical activity while listening to your favorite music improved the lining of your blood vessels and showed impressive benefits on cardiovascular health.

I hope you are going to be drunk with the Holy Spirit. That is the reason why we worship, sing and give thanks to God every Friday evening before our dinner.

25. Jesus, company of the expendables

Scripture texts: Mark 2:15-17 and Luke 7:34

INTRODUCTION

We, the pastors of the Nest Mission, have been talking about Jesus using the book, 'Profiles of Jesus' written by 14 scholars. From the book, today, I am using the chapter 13, titled, *Dirt, Shame, and Sin in the Expendable Company of Jesus* by Stephen Patterson, professor of the New Testament at Eden Seminary in St. Louis, MO. I chose the Scripture texts from Mark and Luke with my sermon title "*Jesus, company of expendables*."

Let us read Mark 2:15-17 and Luke 7:34 together.

Mark 2:15-17

And as he sat at dinner in Levi's house, many tax-collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax-collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax-collectors and sinners?' ¹⁷When Jesus heard this, he said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.'

Luke 7:34

³⁴the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!"

In the first page of his article, Prof. Patterson is asking 'What was the goodness the followers of Jesus saw in Jesus' words & deeds? What was the good news - the "gospel" - they heard in his words? What words and deeds of Jesus made them confess they had seen God?

I am going to ask you, the members, the same question he was asking. For you, what made you believe in Jesus? In other words, what words or deeds he said or did made you believers? Can you share in a few words? Next, I am going to ask pastors what words or deeds called you to be pastors? In other words, why did you want to be a pastor? Thank you for sharing.

I can summarize his main points in long chapter 13 as follows:

First, He summarizes the world of Roman Empire and the world of Jesus. Although this came up in the past in our sermons, he introduces a little different source: Jesus was born, lived and died about a century after Rome had taken Palestine by force. When many towns were slow in paying their share of the Judean tribute, all the inhabitants were sold into slavery. Later, shortly before the birth of Jesus, Rome quelled protests by sacking the great cities of Galilee and Samaria just over the hill from Jesus' hometown. The protest ended with a public crucifixion of 2000 of the ring leaders. Rome sold the Palestinian people into slavery. Rome used the slaves for the mines, and building the great Roman ships. Rome built its empire on the backs of slaves. Jesus would have known about Rome, and its great *Pax*, peace. Rome claimed that it was giving Roman Peace to the world, called the *Pax Romana*. They invade other countries and call it "Roman Peace Making."

The emperor controlled the means to life. 20% enjoyed wealth, power and all other privileges. 80% of the population, peasants lived on the very margins of existence. Rome's purpose was to suck up as many of a province's resources as it could. It slowly drained the life out

of places like Palestine, Jesus' world. In such a system, peasants are fortunate enough to get a full day's work. They receive enough to pay to eat for a day - the life of subsistence. When it rains, they had to beg or starve.

Secondly, those who were poor, lived on the margin and were called "expendables." Tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers, beggars, the blind, lames, mute, mentally ill shepherds, dung collectors, tanners, peddlers, weavers, bath attendants, gamblers, bandits, Gentiles, and women all expendables in the Roman Empire. They had no role, no function, and no place in their society, and they couldn't offer anything to and for their society.

The landless were expendables in society where the basic economic engine is land. Peasants without the land were nothing. They were all landless expendables. In our modern day term, the landless is unemployed, jobless and homeless people. Tax collectors are seen as traitors, unworthy of the company of respectable people. Tax collectors who extracted tax from poor peasants were hated. Zacchaeus would have engaged subordinates to do the actual work of collecting. Levi, who was called by Jesus (Mark 2;14) was a tax collector. Frequently slaves were purchased as 'tax collectors' The male tax collector was equivalent to the female role of 'prostitute'. Tax collectors and prostitutes were both expendable in the Empire.

Jesus lived outside the system of power and economy of Roman Empire. He was an itinerant teacher who had no home, no job, no earning. Jesus was a tekton, a "carpenter," (Mark 6:3). In that culture, artisans generally ranked below the peasant class. So, Jesus may have been an expendable too. In Matthew 8:20, Jesus said, fox have holes and birds in the air have nest but the son of man has no place to lay his head. Thus, Jesus not only knew expendables, but he himself could have been one of those expendables.

Thirdly, in that Roman-Jewish world the expendables were treated as the shamed sinners, and unclean. In that culture, common people automatically connected those who suffered from poverty, low class jobs, illness, misfortune, disability and any deficiency to sin, dirt, uncleanness.

Fourthly, Jesus was constantly in the company of the expendables. Our text from Matthew presents Jesus among all the sick and afflicted expendables. The other Lukan texts presents Jesus eating with sinners, the expendables. They called him “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!” Jesus eats with lepers, known to be unclean in (Mark 14:3). He has conversation with Gentiles, who were regarded as unclean (Mark 7:24-30). He welcomes prostitutes who were treated unclean sinners into his company (Luke 7:36-50).

In that culture they had very special rules regarding who you eat with. Gentiles ate with Gentiles; Jews with Jews. Men with men; women with women. Washing preceded eating. But there were women at table with Jesus, and he did not chase them away (Mark 14: 3-9; Luke 7:36-50). Jesus seems to have initiated a very peculiar, open practice of table fellowship. Eating together is a social activity that establishes group identity and boundaries. In the ancient world, eating together was perhaps the most common form of social formation.

Jesus said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick do. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Mark 2:14-17). He is saying that he came to cure all expendables of his day.

Fifthly, how did Jesus treat these expendables? Jesus invited them to come, sit, eat, and talk with him. Jesus included all the expendables in his company. He invited them to become part of the Empire of God. With Jesus, the expendables share the experience of being unclean, shame and the experience of being regarded as sinful .

Jesus said that he came for them. He regarded the unclean as clean. He treated the shamed with honor. He declared sinners righteous and able to stand in the glorious presence of God. Together they created an Empire of God. Jesus brought these expendables back into the human community.

The Gospel typically depicts him speaking of his activity as the *basileia* of God. Jesus announces the presence of this *basileia*; Kingdom of God. He calls prostitutes, tax collectors, children, and beggars into

this *basileia*. In the synoptic gospels this term is used over a hundred times. Jesus is reported to speak all the time about the *basileia* of God. Jesus brought them the Kingdom of God in the midst of Roman Empire, which was highly risky. People could have lost their lives for it. Of course, Jesus did lose his life.

The author's final point is a question on how did these expendables feel about Jesus' words and deeds? How would you feel if you experienced the same? They had experienced the meaning of God disclosed in the person of Jesus. Yes, they were able to confess that they had seen God in Jesus.

I would end with quotes from Professor Spong who said so well and brilliantly.

“Jesus found his cause in the poor, sick outcasts. He identified with the hungry, thirsty, sick, imprisoned, and homeless. He claimed no power. His teaching found him using Lazarus, a poor beggar as the sign of his kingdom. He identified his cause with the half-breed Samaritan. When this self-giving Jesus was crucified, he refused to defend himself. He accepted the whips and nails of his tormentors, and he died praying for them (Luke 23:34). His life was too vivid to be forgotten, too real to be ignored, and how could they deny the power of the experience men and women had with this Jesus? His love was real. His sense of presence was vivid. His magnetic appeal to others was immense. Self-giving, suffering, powerlessness, and self-sacrifice were the marks of his human life. There was an undeniable beauty about this Jesus, who was in fact *a man for others*. That was the meaning of God disclosed in the person of Jesus. They had experienced the definition of God. They ended up confessing Jesus was God.”

Jesus represented these expendables. Jesus was an expendable in the eyes of the Jews. All other expendables found God in Jesus. They found each other. They became one loving community that would die for each other.

Do you want to be in Jesus' community? We are one of those. If you recognize it and see Jesus in our midst, all God's people say, Amen.

26. Product made in God

Scripture text: Gen. 1:26-27

Theme: Product made in God

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the amazing grace of God who allowed us to have this retreat. Welcome everyone to this retreat. 12 of us are here this week-end to spend time together. Let us welcome Rev. Luther Stohs for joining us. He is going to sing with us.

When I was in the U.S. for the first time in 1960, most items in the market were made in Japan. When I came back in 1970, many items in the market carried labels, made in Taiwan. After that we saw items made in Korea. But in those days we could also see items made in USA. But these days, we can hardly find any item made in USA any more. Most items we see are made in China.

Are we the products made in USA because we are U.S. citizens? Or, are some of us made in Korea because that is our country of origin? My 15 years old Toyota with 150,000 miles on is still running good. My Chevy van died on me at 90,000 miles. But how about us? Do we last about 80 -90 years?

The theme of our retreat is "*How to be God's servants.*" Not just ordained pastors can be God's servant but anyone can be one. This week-end you will hear a lot about "leadership." To prepare ourselves, I want to help us to identify first who we are. Therefore, my theme to begin with this retreat is "We are made in God."

Then we will talk about why God made us. For what purpose did God give us life? To find the purpose of our life, we must find our origin. Where do we find our origin? Do we find our origin in our native country or our parents? Anyone has any idea? We must find our origin from God and in God.

Our Genesis text says, ²⁷ *So God created humankind in his image, ... male and female he created them.* ²⁸ *God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it;*

This passage is saying that we are the product made in God. This product made in God will last forever. Now, we have found our origin. Where do we find the purpose of our lives? Do we go to supermarket or shopping mall to find it? Does anyone have an idea where can we find the purpose of our lives?

Purpose of our Life: According to Rick Warren, the author of "Purpose Driven Life," and he is also the pastor of Saddlebag Church in California, "Searching for the purpose of our life is not about us. The purpose of our life is far greater than our own personal fulfillment, or even our happiness. It's far greater than our family, our career, or even our dreams and ambitions".

He says, "If we want to know why we were placed on this planet, we must begin with God. We were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose. The search for the purpose of life has puzzled humankind for thousands of years. That's because we begin at the wrong starting point - ourselves. We ask self-centered questions like what do *I* want to be? What should *I* do with my life? What are *my* goals, *my* ambition, and *my* dreams for my future? By focusing on *ourselves* we will never get to the purpose of our lives," according to Warren.

Job 12:10 says, "In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being." Therefore, we are in God's hands. We exist only because God wills that we exist. *We were made by God and for God - and until we understand that, life will never make sense.* It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads us to a dead end. Because we are the product made in God, and not made in USA nor made in China, God is the original country we have come from. God is the owner of our lives, the USA does not own us, nor does Korea own us. We are the creatures made in God, by God and for God.

- The Bible says, ⁶ *To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace* (Rom. 8: 6).

Warren claims, God was thinking of us long before we ever thought about God. God's purpose for our life predates our conception. God planned it before we existed, *without our input.* We may choose our career, our spouse, our hobbies, and many other things,

but we don't get to choose our purposes. The purpose of our life fits into much larger purpose that God has designed. We can discover our identity and purpose only through our relationship with God.

Therefore, our life is about letting God use us for *God's* purpose. ...Just like our song, "I am gonna live so God can use me."

Jesus Christ, who once lived on earth helps us to relate to this God. Jesus said, those who saw him also saw God, because Jesus is representing God. If we know clearly who Jesus is, we know exactly who the God is. Because Jesus is the mirror of God. We also get to know who we are. Many Christians believe that Jesus is the incarnate of God or he is God.

He came to stand in solidarity with you, who suffer in homelessness with no jobs, no homes but yet can be his friends and servants. That new identity will help us to draw a picture of what our life is going to look like, and how we can be servants of God.

You will hear from Rev. La Point about "troubled life to leadership." You will hear from Rev. Park on "Finding your Strength and Gift." You will hear from Rev. Jung on "biblical image" of leadership. You will hear from me and Rev. Jung about leadership virtues. You will hear from each other a story of different President of the United States who overcame his troubles and became a President. Through all these, I hope you keep your hearts wide open and let God walk in and plant a seed of hope and courage.

In our wrap up session on Sunday afternoon, each of us will have a chance to talk about our decision and plan, the way we are going to serve God. So I hope we all become new persons with new identities, and with new visions when we leave here. No matter where you may sleep, in the park or in your car, I hope you will be ready to get up and walk not as a homeless client but as a proud leader and servant of God. We, the pastors of the Nest Mission are looking forward to working with you for another year. May God bless us throughout this retreat. Amen.

27. Awake lest not fall into temptation

Scripture Text: Matt. 26: 41; I Cor. 10: 13.

Introduction

There may be no one among us who has not experienced temptation of some kind. Most of us also have an experience of giving in to temptation. Therefore, today I chose two Bible texts. Let us read them together:

Matt. 26: 41: *Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

I Cor. 10: 13: *No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.*

From these texts, our theme is "stay awake, lest we fall into temptation."

My first point is reflection on the Scripture text: After sharing his last supper with disciples, Jesus wanted to pray because he knew his time was coming. Jesus needed to pray to God at this critical moment. So he took the disciples with him. When they arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told them " *Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow, to the point of death.* Knowing the most painful death lies before him, he was agitated and grieved. Going a little further, he threw himself on the ground and prayed. He asked God to pass this trial but not what he wanted but what God willed. He returned to his companions three times and, every time, he found them sleeping. They have proved unable to fulfill Jesus' request to keep watch with him in an hour of crisis. Jesus said, *the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*"

According to Commentator Geddert, to watch (*keep awake*) means to identify with Jesus, remain loyal to him, follow his instructions, and follow him even on the road to the cross. In Gethsemane, the disciples were supposed to show loyalty by standing or kneeling with Jesus and submitting to God's will with Jesus during his time of distress, agitation, and grief. They were to gain spiritual strength to overpower weak flesh. If the disciples were loyal, they would keep their eyes wide open, seeing beyond suffering and death to the coming of God's reign. But the

disciples slept through the crisis. They fell into trial by giving in to the weakness of the flesh. Their eyes have been heavy; they saw nothing beyond enemies and swords and danger. Despite their self-confident promises that they would never desert Jesus, they fled.

Commentator Williamson claims that the disciples and Jesus in Gethsemane offer readers two types for responding to the tests of life. In one response, the weakness of the flesh dominates and the outcome is the abandonment of Jesus. In other, commitment to the will of God dominates. The immediate consequence is arrest and crucifixion, but the final outcome was resurrection. Jesus knows that our mind wants to do something good, but our flesh is weak and falls into temptation.

My second point is: Are you being tested when you plan to do something positive and constructive? Yes, almost everyone experiences such tests. Would you share your experience in giving in to the devil's wish? Does the devil tell you not to go to Bible study and have some worldly fun, or not to go to Friday service for fun of drinking? That is what exactly happens to some members. So they miss the Bible study or Friday service and dinner. Some of our friends fall into temptation to drink harmful substance instead of eating healing dinner. Have you been captive of long term temptation? Examples? Is alcohol addiction a good example? Some people cannot resist stealing and fall into temptation. Or do you never give in? If not, how was it possible? Share your experience.

Matt. 6:13, Jesus taught us to pray, "Do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil." If we can't do it alone, God will help us. Every day we must say this prayer not to give into the devil's wish.

My third point is getting encouragement from Paul's statement in I Cor. 10: 13, St. Paul says, "*God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.*" What is he saying here? Yes, he is saying that there is no test we cannot endure and we have God-given strength to subdue it. God wouldn't allow us to be tested beyond our ability. However, on the other hand, Paul told his readers not to feel exempt from trials because it is common lot for all humans. In fact, those who are most engaged in the way of God seem to experience most intensely the opposition of evil. If Jesus struggled, who is exempt? No one! On one hand, this statement may come as a shock to those who have felt that they had an exemption from problems because they are in special

relationship with God. On the other hand, to people who are going through difficult times this passage is a source of assurance that they are not alone.

Again, Paul's statement means that God would set some limit on what He would allow to happen to us: God "*will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.*" God knows us, our strength and our weaknesses. This doesn't mean though that we will never be overcome by evil or that our failure will not be the result of having more than we can handle.

Paul assures us that "*with the temptation [He] will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*" (v. 13). We ask God for help and God will give it to us.

Scholars would say, a real temptation is an offer not to fall but to rise.

Temptation is an indication of strength, not of weakness. We are not tempted to do what we cannot do but what is within our power. The greater the strength, the greater the temptation.

The author of the Book of Hebrew would say in Heb 2:13, "Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested." All this means that there is no temptation that we cannot overcome.

Because God is with us and will help us to overcome the test *if* we allow God to help us.

Do you have any experience you had overcome temptation with help from God? Let us stay wide awake. Let us not allow the devil to overcome us.

Let us all push the devil away. God says, we can do it. Jesus says, we can do it.

St. Paul says, we can do it. If you believe you can do it, you can do it. Put down all your devils on the paper. We will destroy all your devils by burning them.

If you believe you can destroy your devils, All God's people say, AMEN, AMEN."

28. Exodus: Healing

Scripture text: Ex. 2: 23-25; 3: 7-10

I chose today's Scripture text from Ex. 2: 23-25; 3: 7-10

Let us read it together:

Ex. 3: 7 Then the LORD said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,⁸ and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.....⁹ The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them.¹⁰ So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt....

This scripture text is telling us four things; 1) Israel was suffering and cried out to God. 2) God heard them. 3) God chose a partner to work with Israel. 4) God, Moses and Israel team succeeded Exodus. Let us review each of those:

First point: Israel was suffering In Egypt. How was happened?

To make a long story short, when Joseph, the 11th son of Jacob, was kidnapped and sold to Egypt by his jealous step brothers. Through all kinds of hardship, hard and faithful work, and steadfast trust in God, he gained trust of the King Pharaoh and rose to power next to Pharaoh. He brought his parents and other 11 brothers and their families, 66 people, to Egypt. Through 430 years in Egypt, Israelite's number grew to six hundred thousand. A new king rose up who didn't know Joseph and feared of Israelite's growth. The new Egyptian king began to abuse and oppress the Israelites to prevent their further growth. This was known as Egyptian bondage or slavery. For Israel this meant harsh labor, abuse, violence, and hardship with no rights to worship God; no rights to keep a child if it was a boy. The purpose of killing boys was to prevent from growing of Israelite's population in Egypt. Israel people were unwanted homeless in Egypt. So the Israelites groaned and moaned and cried out for help.

My second point is God heard their cry:

Their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their cry. God said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry. Indeed, I know their sufferings. My point is that the heart of God aches when God's people aches. The heart of God felt the pain and groaning of Israelites.

My third point is: God responds in several ways.

Upon hearing Israel's suffering God got anxious and busy. God was taking an action by coming down. In those days people believed God was moving around physically. We can understand God's coming down as God's intimate response to God's people. God wanted to get them out of there and bring them to a good and broad land flowing with milk and honey. God's response was like a mother's response to a suffering child.

His next action was to find found a partner, who was Moses. God needed someone physically to go to Pharaoh and to lead Israel's liberation movement. So God partnered with Moses for this mission of Israel's Exodus. God always looks for a partner on earth to work with. Moses was the one who intervened on behalf of God and Israelites. God was behind Moses guiding him on what to do next and how to do it.

My fourth point is God, Moses and Israel team succeeded Exodus.

I use the word "team". I am a firm believer in "partnership with each other and with God to achieve something. Although I believe God's almighty power can perform any miracle I also believe in God's intention to include and involve us in most events happening to us. In this case God did not want to do it alone without Moses' cooperation. Moses could not do it without the Israelites' cooperation. All three parties had to stick together, cooperate with each other and support one another. But God was the leader and director throughout. Had God liberated Israelites miraculously without any effort on the part of Moses and Israelites they wouldn't appreciate the liberation experience as much as they did. The Bible reports that the Israelites talk about this exodus experience intentionally all the time throughout generations. That experience became their ground to understand other poor suffering people and help them.

Through a long and hard process with Pharaoh, finally God, Moses and Israelites team succeeded in achieving Israelites' exodus. Exodus for Israel people meant "leaving, come out of, overcome and liberation from the Egyptian bondage, which meant ending their slavery and their homelessness.

Some scholars would explain the Exodus event as a healing and restoration to healthy existence. The situation of bondage in which Israel found itself was one of disorder and pathology, not a true state of human existence. This God as "healer" is the one who liberates, redeems, ransoms, restores to the true intention of creation. The true intention of God's creation is to restore persons, communities, and ultimately the whole of creation to their rightful status of health.

My last point is applying Israel's exodus experience to our own situation today.

Are we in bondage and slavery in anyway?" Can you name some of your bondage? Can you also name our modern day bondage? Yes, the poor are under the "Egyptian bondage" of "poverty and unemployment." Too many people are under the bondage of homelessness and substance abuse. Many people are under the bondage of emotional hang ups- such as anger, hatred, grief that poisons your body and mind and, are damaging your health. If you are enslaved too long by these destructive emotions, it is called "mental illness." Once you are enslaved by these Egyptian bondages, it is hard to get out of it. You know it! Often times we are sucked into such bondages and can't get us out of them.

Yes, the rich are under "Egyptian bondage" of "greed." Once you are enslaved by the "greed" it is hard to get free from it. We are under many different forms of addiction and bondages.

Are you experiencing your exodus? Do you want to experience an exodus?

Do you have Moses? God partners with many Moses for your exodus. God always responds through people. God works with people in the world to bring exodus to God's suffering people. Who is your Moses? Name her or him. If God chose a Moses for you, are you working with your Moses? God wouldn't do it alone. God uses Moses. Moses wouldn't do it alone. Moses needs you. God, your Moses and you all work together to achieve your exodus. We are all God's partners to experience our exodus. Are you in and with God to bring your desired exodus?

My conclusion is that God in Jesus wants to bring exodus for all of us. Jesus came to help the poor to experience exodus from poverty. He came to help the captives to experience exodus from jails and

prisons. He came to help those in bondage to experience exodus from the oppression. He came to help women to experience exodus from all forms of discriminations. Jesus came to help the sick to experience exodus from their disease. Jesus came to help the hopeless to experience exodus from their despair. Jesus came to help the angry to experience exodus from their hatred of self and others. Jesus came to help the weak to experience exodus from powerlessness. Jesus came to help all of you to experience exodus from homelessness. Jesus came to help all of us to experience exodus from our bondage of sins. If you determine to work with your Moses to experience your exodus, all God's people say, Amen.

29. Inborn desire for God

I John 4:7-8 B

beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Romans 7:14-15, 17

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁷ But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh.

INTRODUCTION

We used the book, "Addiction and Grace" written by Dr. May, a psychiatrist for our retreat. It is so good that we the pastors decided to use that book in preparing our sermon so that we can share it with you too.

He was not biased at all in presenting the addiction issue by including all forms of addiction such as alcohol, drug, work, power, success stress, honor, sense of responsibility, coffee, cigarettes, chocolate, and many others. He invited everyone to recognize their own addiction to something. Dr. May was inclusive of other religious teachings also. While he was inclusive, he started the book by mentioning human desire for God and ends it with God's grace. Because we all,

have learned something new by building more knowledge and insight to our own addiction; by discovering God's endless self-giving grace on us we all had a transforming experience, Our sermons will relate to "addiction issues."

1. My first Bible text comes from I John 4:7-8. Who wants to read it for us? We all know love. There is no one here who doesn't love someone. We didn't go to school to learn how to love. We never went through any training to learn how to love. Even someone who had never gone to school is able to love. We can call it our inborn desire or ability to love. Since God is the original source of love, we are born of God. Everyone regardless of your faith in God, you are born of God.

I shall give some examples: Some people who have no religion seek God for help in their crisis. Some pray to sun, moon, stars, trees, rocks or to their ancestors' spirits to ask help. Regardless of how we seek the power we believe that power can bless us and heal us because it is humanity's inborn desire for God although they don't call them "God." This yearning is the essence of the human spirit;

Therefore, St. Paul says that *everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

Dr. May would say that it is "a longing for love" regardless of how we describe it. It is a hunger to love, to be loved, and to move closer to the Source of love.

Whether we are consciously religious or not, this desire is our deepest longing and our most precious treasure. It gives us meaning. God creates us out of love. Our desire for God draws us to that perfect love. But some of us have repressed this desire, burying it beneath so many other interests that we are completely unaware of it. Or we may experience it in different ways - as a longing for wholeness, completion, or fulfillment.

Modern theology describes this desire as God-given. We are born with it. In an outpouring of love, God creates us and plants the seeds of this desire within us. Then, throughout our lives, God nourishes this desire. This means that we are created for God and to seek God.

2. Here let me bring in our second text: ¹⁵*I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.* What he is saying is what is exactly said by Dr. May, who said that along the way something gets in the way. That longing repeatedly disappears from our awareness. Our desires are captured, and we give ourselves over to things that we really do not want. Dr. May blames two forces are responsible for this: repression and addiction. We frequently repress our desire for love because love often hurts us. You may fall in love with someone. But that person abandons you and you are left with pain. And you don't want to love anyone again because you don't want that pain again. Therefore, often we repress our desire to love to minimize this suffering.

Anyone experience this? We also repress our desire for God to avoid pain. We try to keep our focus on safer things. Psychology calls this *displacement*. It makes us attach to substances that make us do things we really do not want to do. These objects of attachment become preoccupations and obsessions; they rule our lives.

3. According to Dr. May, addictions are not limited to substances. Like myself, people are addicted to work, performance, responsibility, helping others, and an almost endless list of other behaviors. All people are addicts, but addiction to alcohol and drugs are more tragic than other kinds of addictions. Addiction is a *state* of compulsion, obsession, or preoccupation that enslaves a persons' will and desire. Addiction makes us being attached, nailed, to specific behaviors, objects, or people. Whatever it wishes to get, it purchases at the cost of our soul. Addiction is like a psychic malignancy, sucking our life energy into specific obsessions and compulsion, less energy for other people.

4. According to Dr. May, spiritually, addiction is a deep-seated form of idolatry. The object of our addictions becomes our false god. They are what we worship, what we attend to, where we give our time and energy. Addiction, then, robs our desire for God. So St. Paul is frustrated that he does what he doesn't want to do. I ended up naming

it “*sin that dwells within me. I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.*” According to Dr. May, Sin is not just ignorance or moral straying, but a kind of bondage or slavery. Theologically, sin is what turns us away from love - away from love for ourselves, away from love for one another, and away from love for God.

5. St. Paul wants to be free from this sin. Dr. May says that *Detachment* can awaken our spirit and show us where God is. Detachment uncovers our basic desire for God and sets it free. This freedom of desire makes us able to love, and love is the goal of the spiritual life.

6. Dr. May further claims that God created us by love, out of love, in love, and for love. It is both our birthright and our authentic destiny to participate fully in this creative loving. God's love wants us to have free will. We are intended to make free choices. Spiritually, our freedom allows us to choose as we wish for or against God, life, and love. This God's love is not enslaving; it is eternally present, yet endlessly open. It seems that free will is given to us so that we may choose freely, without coercion or manipulation, to love God in return, and to love one another. This is the deepest desire of our hearts. But our freedom is not complete. Working against it is the powerful force of addiction which erodes our freedom.

7. You and I can easily identify with the words of the Apostle Paul.

I know how much you want to stop abuse of substances and restore your health and normal life. But you and I know we do what we don't want to do. Do you agree with this? We give into the addiction of all forms. I hear several friends are saying that they want to be clean and sober. But they show that they cannot do it alone.

As our conclusion let me summarize that all human beings have an inborn desire for God because God created us out of love, for love, in love, and to love. This fact was proved by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He came to love, live to love and died to love. He is the incarnate of God's love. He showed us exactly what the God's love looks like. And therefore, we are not hopeless. We can do it. We can terminate our addiction in God's love and grace.

Amen.

30. What did you sow and reap? – Year-end sermon

Scripture text:

Job 4:8: As I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.

Prov. 22: 8: Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of anger will fail.

Gal. 6: 7-8: you reap whatever you sow. ⁸ If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

Gal. 6: 9: So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.

Ps. 126: 5: May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome everyone. The year of 2011 is almost gone. What was the best thing happened to you this year? Anyone would like to share? What was the worst thing happened to you this year? Anyone would like to share?

1. LET US READ THE BIBLE VERSES

My sermon theme is what did you sow and what did you reap? A friend of Job in Job 4: 8, and the author of the Proverb 22, and St. Paul in Gal. 6, all three people say, "*We reap what we sow*" If you have sown corn, you will reap corn. If you have sown apple, you will reap apple. Do you all agree with that?

Our life is a business of plowing and sowing. Whatever we do, means we have been sowing something. We reap the fruits from what we have sown. That is an absolute and scary truth. We plow and sow through our thoughts, our talk and our action. Therefore, whatever we do all means plowing and sowing. We get to reap exactly what we had sown. If we sow goodness, we will reap goodness. If we sow justice, we will reap justice. If we sow love, we will reap love, if we sow friendliness, we will reap friendliness. If we sow mercy, we will reap

mercy. What we have sown in youth we will reap in our old age. What was sown by their parents, will be reaped by their children. What we have sown in this world will be reaped in our life after.

2. St. Paul said so well in Galatians 6: 9, "If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh. Last week-end, at the Christmas gifts of motel rooms, people who sowed drinking and smoking in the room reaped eviction. People who sow alcohol and drug will reap the loss of jobs and families. People who sow stealing will reap incarceration.

3. St. Paul also said in Galatians 6: 9, "If you sow to the Spirit you will reap eternal life from the Spirit." People who have sown faithfulness to Bible class reaped knowledge in God's words and God's love. People who have sown steadfastness to this Friday service, reaped fellowship with God and with one another. People who faithfully sing every Friday will reap healing in God's love. You will also reap salvation. All the services and good deeds can be sowing to the Spirit. If we sow thanksgiving and will reap the same. Our donors and volunteers sow their love and services and they shall reap blessings.

4. Our concluding question is what shall we do? Answers come from Galatians 6:9 and Psalms 126:5. Let us read them in unison: *So let us NOT grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.* It is difficult and takes time and effort to sow good things. Some of you might have to sow sobriety in tears, patience, and perseverance and even in emotional and physical pain. Paul says you will reap ALL at the harvest time. Psalmist says, those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy. Although it is difficult to sow but you will reap good rewards.

Our friend, Jeff is in alcohol treatment. It is a difficult process of keeping all the rules and restrictions for 6 months. What will be his good crops? He will reap a new personality and new life.Let us now all close our eyes for a moment. Think of what you have sown this year and what you have reaped. What do you determine to sow next year? What do you dream to reap next year?

31. The Holy Ground

Scripture text: Exodus 3: 1-5; I Cor. 3:16-17

I chose Scripture text from Exodus 3: 1-5. Let us read together Exodus 3: 1-5.

Exodus 3: 1-5; Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. ³Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' ⁴When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' ⁵Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'

My Sermon theme is “Holy Ground”

The Bible verse we read is the story of Moses who received a call out of burning bush. It is a very well-known story in the Bible. I think we need to know Moses' story to understand our story today.

Moses' story:

In Egypt, the Hebrews multiplied and became very strong. King Herod began to oppress the Hebrews by forcing them to do cruel labor. In Egypt, Pharaoh was afraid that the Hebrews would gain power thinking, someday, when enemy invades Egypt, the Hebrews might join them and overthrow all Egyptians. So King Herod commanded his people to throw every boy that is born to the Hebrews into the Nile river (Ex. 1: 20b, 22). At that time, Moses happened to be born. His mother hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer she put her baby in a papyrus basket and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. She found the basket, opened it, and found the baby in it crying. So she took pity on him. She took him as her son. She named him Moses (Ex. 2: 3, 5-6, 10). Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace, in the home of Hebrew's enemy. Isn't that ironic!

One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and saw their forced labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When Pharaoh heard about it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh. He settled in the land of Midian (Exodus 2: 11-12, 15). Moses suffered forty years of separation from his people and family. But the years have passed. He has settled down to a shepherd's life in Midian, after being married to Jethro's daughter, the priest. Moses is now eighty years of age.

Moses was walking along an old familiar path with his sheep. He saw a bush that seemed to be on fire. He watched it, expecting it to crumble into gray ashes. But to his amazement, it continued to burn. God called Moses, "Moses. And Moses answered, "Here I am." And God told Moses to take his shoes off, *for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.* Now, let's all repeat saying, "Take your shoes off because it is holy ground." One more time, "Take your shoes off because it is holy ground."

The fire in the bush associates with God's presence. The burning bush symbolizes God's presence. *The angel of the Lord* appeared. God and the Angel are identical and interchangeable. The Angel of the Lord is a visible appearance of God.

What can we learn from this story? When we are in God's presence, the ground whereon we stand is always holy. That's why Moses was told to take shoes off. This means that when you come in to this church, the ground you are standing or sitting on is HOLY, because God is present here with us. Therefore, we must take shoes off. When God tells us to take our shoes off, what do we do? Yes, we must take our shoes off because this place we are sitting is the Holy Ground. Your feet might be dirty and smell but let's all take our shoes off. Everyone takes shoes off. Did everyone take your shoes off? How do you feel after taking shoes off? Yes, bad smell?

Shoes means "uncleanness." They walked on dusty and dirty streets all day. They carry our dirty feet. Dirty shoes represent dirty bags we have been carrying on our back, on our head, and in our hearts.

What are your dirty shoes represent for you? Let us call out. Dirty shoes represent our dirty thinking, dirty resentment and dirty anger, dirty hatred, filthy hearts poisoned and polluted by alcohol and drugs,

dirty behaviors, dirty habits, dirty life style, all dirty sickness and all forms of dirty sins.

Taking dirty shoes off means that we lay down all of our dirty bags, behaviors, habits, life style; we change, we give up all of dirty bags: We change, we transform to new persons; we renew our relationship with ourselves, with God, with others and with the world. This is the process we become holy. After taking dirty shoes off, what happened to Moses? God gave him a mission to carry out, which was being sent to Pharaoh in Egypt. He was commissioned to the killer's land to rescue Hebrew people. After we take our shoes off, we will be sent out to the dead city.

It also means our repentance for all our sins. If you don't take your shoes off, if you don't lay down that garbage, there is no room for God's spirit to come in and dwell. In Lev. 11: 44, God said, "Sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy." We must be holy so that God will reside in us. Because God resides in us, we must be clean and holy. I Cor. 3:16-17 says we are God's temple where God wants to reside. So our hearts must be clean and holy too. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The Greek word for *dwelt* literally means to "pitch a tent." By pitching His tent in our midst, God becomes present with us, identifies Himself with us; and the reality is that God is here in our midst.

Through Christ, God comes to pitch His tent" among us. God pitches tent in our hearts and among us right here. That is the reason why we must take shoes off. We must lay down our dirty baggage. So we may dwell in God's tent with our God and our Lord Jesus. And we all shall be God's people.

32. Permanent Home/Memorial Service

Scripture Text: John 14: 2-3

INTRODUCTION

Everyone is welcome to the memorial service for Rich Ward. Rich Ward used to come to our dinner and sat in your midst. He used to wear dark color jacket and sat in the back seat. He was very quiet, a

loner but he was very gentle, friendly and harmless man. He stayed at the Andy's Motel from Feb 8, 2010 - November 15, 2012. 2 1/2 years.

Two weeks ago he passed away in his sleep at age 62. I put his testimony on the front page since I couldn't get his photo. His testimony explains quite well how much a room meant to him. I titled my message "Permanent Housing" from John 14: 1-3. Let us all read John 14: 2-3 together:

²In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*

³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also

Those of you who experience homelessness know exactly what the permanent housing means. In these days, many people find it almost impossible to get permanent housing unless you have a steady job and income. It is equally hard to get low income housing. Not everyone is qualified for it either. Even when you are qualified for it, you have to wait 5-10 years because there is not enough low income housing. Therefore, many people easily fall into homelessness.

As you all know, homelessness is so hard that it shortens a person's life span. Two years ago, his toes were almost amputated in a cold wet weather. So, we placed him in a motel room. Life at motel was not real permanent home. But for him, it was. He liked it so much and so comfortable that he didn't want to leave that space even briefly.

John's text is a very comforting statement for people who have no homes and for all those who lived difficult life.

Jesus said, he goes ahead of us to prepare our permanent home. Rich is now welcomed into God's permanent home. He doesn't have to exhaust his social security for rent. It is free permanently. It is a permanent home for him. There he wouldn't experience any more homelessness. That doesn't mean we all must die to get to that permanent home. I would say that most of us are homeless physically, or emotionally or spiritually. Even if our physical permanent housing is not found yet, we can find emotional and spiritual permanent home.

When you don't let yourself wasting away in an anxiety, fear, and anger, you can still find peace in _____ mind, then it is emotionally permanent home. I am not saying you must satisfy with your homelessness. You know that you and I are not satisfied with your homelessness. But we still can thank God for our life and find peace even in that circumstances because if we allow our anger and despair to abuse ourselves, _____ we damage our body and soul all together.

We can also find spiritually permanent home by coming closer to God and _____ residing in God and with God, and keep on doing that which pleases God.

I am not saying you must thank God for being homeless. I am saying that even in whatever circumstances we are in, we can find spiritually permanent home _____ while we are on earth.

Today I would like to offer condolence to his family members, relatives and friends who are grieving for the loss of Rich, because we all know that he is in God's permanent home where there is no more homelessness.

Now I would like to invite family members and friends who want to share memories of him. We have him on our DVD too. Let us view it briefly.

Let us pray to commit his spirit into the hands of God. Let us bow our heads:

Creator God, before whom generations rise and pass away. We praise you for all your servants, who, having lived this life in faith, now live eternally with you. Especially we thank you for your servant Rich Ward for the gift of his life, for all in him that was good, kind, and rich although his life was painful. We thank you that his death is past and pain ended, and that he is now entered the joy you have prepared for him. Into your loving hands, O God of love, we commend his spirit. Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, into the glorious company of the saints. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Now let us end by singing "God be with you till we meet again."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Volume 1: Who and Why People are Homeless.



Jean Kim is an immigrant from Korea to the United States in 1970. Ever since most of her career life in the U.S., she has been serving the homeless people up to the present.

Jean Kim is a graduate of Han Shin Graduate School of Theology, Korea (BD in 1959), Dan Kuk University, Korea (BA in 1960), St. Louis University (MSW in 1977) and San Francisco Theological Seminary (D. Min in 2006).

Jean Kim is a retired minister and a former staff of (national) Presbyterian Church (USA) for the issue of homelessness. She is also a Washington State certified social worker and a certified mental health counselor.

Jean Kim is a founder and co-founder of 10 mission programs: Founder of Olive St. Social Club (a day center for the homeless), Cherry St. Social Club (a day center of the homeless), the Church of Mary Magdalene (of homeless women), National Korean American Coalition for the Homeless, National Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness, Nest Mission for the homeless, Regional Presbyterian Networks to End Homelessness (Washington State) and International Ministry at the University of Washington Campus Ministry; co-founder of the Agape Church for the Homeless, New Haven, CT and Korean Community Counseling Center, Seattle. She received 20 Community Service Awards including Woman of Faith Award from Presbyterian Church (USA), Medal of Honor from Korean government and Hero of the Homeless from the Nightwatch in Seattle. She is an organizer, preacher, lecturer, workshop leader and writer on homelessness, domestic violence, women's issues, and clergy sexual misconduct.

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