

From volume 5, People in Purple: Sermons

Sermons to Christian Churches

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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 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 Dorcas 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: Luke 10:25-37-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 then 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 Pentagon's 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 worshipping 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 represent 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. Buchannan 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

April 11, 2004

Scripture Text: 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. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ³⁹⁴⁰There 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, cloth 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 tombs? 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 tombs. 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 2,000, 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 and 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 wore 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 Buchannan, 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.*