

"Sabbath Shalom" Genesis 2:3 (07/21/2024)

From last October to April, I did a pastoral care and support internship as a hospital chaplain at Evanston Hospital. I could have the opportunity to meet diverse religious leaders during the internship in the hospital. One day, in the chaplain's office, a Rabbi chaplain supervisor and a Rabbi intern were discussing something. Their relationship was that of a supervisor and intern, but the Rabbi intern was also a Jewish leader who knew about the Law well. Their discussion was very serious, and I was interested a lot in Jewish Law, so I listened to their discussion carefully. Once I caught up with their discussion topic, I was so surprised because I could not understand why they were discussing the topic. Their topic was, "Is it okay to brew a cup of coffee during Sabbath?" The Rabbi supervisor argued that it is ok to brew coffee if they keep the Sabbath cooking law. The Rabbi intern argued it is not ok because it is work that produces new things from resources.

Of course, it is not a big matter for us, but it is a serious topic for Jewish people because God ordered Jews to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Genesis 2:3 shows how the Sabbath day started. "God blessed the seventh day and made it special, because on that day he rested from his work." Because God rested on the seventh day, and God ordered people to keep the Sabbath day holy in the Law, the Sabbath day started. In Genesis 2:3, the CEV version translated the Hebrew word

“way-qad-des” to “special.” This Hebrew word also has the meaning of “Sanctified, consecrated and made holy.” So, we can understand that “God made the Sabbath holy.” Then, how can something be holy? We can see the word holy in the Bible. Holy generally has the meaning of separated and consecrated. Holy is God’s unique character. God is holy and God is the only one who can make something holy. So, when God is present, something can be holy. The Sabbath is the day of God’s presence.

While I was preparing today’s sermon, God made me remember my Israel pilgrim tour. I used to think the Sabbath was a strict and severe day. Jews were not allowed to do work during the Sabbath. They could not even turn on the light. So I thought the Sabbath was a calm and silent day. However, I was really shocked when I saw the Sabbath gathering of Jews in Israel. My tour team was staying at a hotel in Jerusalem. On Friday, lots of Jewish families came into the hotel. I heard from the tour guide that many Jewish families stay at a hotel during the Sabbath because the hotel provides all Sabbath food, Sabbath elevators, and foreign laborers who can work during the Sabbath. The shocking event happened on Friday night at the first Sabbath dinner meal. Each family gathered together at the dining table. They started to worship God loudly and praise God by singing. I have never had that noisy and loud dinner meal at a hotel. The Sabbath was a festival of Jewish families with God’s

presence.

I also remembered another Sabbath day when I was on a mission trip after I got married. There was a prayer house on the Mountain Olives in Israel. A missionary from the United States founded the prayer house to pray for Jews to return to Jesus. The missionary and staff team of the house showed the Sabbath worship service on Friday night to my team. The worship service was full of joy. They played the harp. They were singing and dancing for more than one hour. The worship service was full of fun and joy in God's presence. This Sabbath day was holy. The day was not a day of arguing about the Law. The day was full of God's presence.

Those two experiences changed my thoughts about the Sabbath and worship services. We Christians have worship services every Sunday. I am not talking about the worship service should not be calm but fun and joyful. No matter whether it is calm or fun, traditional or contemporary, indoor or outdoor, we should have the worship service with God's presence. The worship service should be the fundamental place that shows God's presence.

God is with us. Today, God gave us this beautiful place, people, and food. I hope today's outdoor service can be your Sabbath. Feel the presence of God, God's joy, and God's peace. And let's make this place and time as the place and time of

God's presence. Amen.