

*"Where is Our Home?" Exodus 13:20-22 / Psalm 84:10 / Luke 19:1-10 (08/11/2024)*

My friends visited me last week to encourage me. A pastor and her husband visited me last Sunday. They came from Hawaii to see my family. The pastor and her husband helped my family a lot when we were in hard times and situations. The pastor taught me a lot about the ministry and provided the baptism for my son. I could not imagine that the first visitor would come from Hawaii. So, when I heard that they would come to visit me, I was so excited.

The next day, last Monday, one of my friends who lives in Toronto, Canada, came to see me. She had done many church projects with me and worked with my wife as a church staff member. She was the person who helped me a lot in my relationship with my wife. If she did not give me advice about my wife, my wife and I could not get married.

Last week was a very happy week for me because of my friends who came from far away. And there was one more person who was very excited. It was my son. My son likes to meet people. He likes to meet my friends because he knows my friends like him, and he has someone with whom to talk. Last week, he was so excited. He had had enough conversations for two days with the pastor's husband and my friend, who came from Canada. He wanted to be with them more time, but

they left soon.

When my son was younger than now, he thought he would see my friends very soon if he said, “See you later.” So, he kept asking me the next day after we met my friends. “Daddy, are we going to meet them today?” He asked me again and again and again for a few days. But at some point, my son started saying things like this. “Dad, I can meet them again someday, right?” I think now he learned that he cannot meet them very soon. I was surprised by his language improvement, but I was also so sad because I thought I gave my son the thing I did not want to give him.

I really thank God because I have had diverse experiences since I was young. I was born and grew up in South Korea. I have also lived in China and New Zealand and traveled to many countries. Of course, It was a great privilege that I could have many experiences. But on the other side of my life, I always struggled with the question, “Where is my home?” When I heard from my son, “Dad, I can meet them again someday, right?” I was sad because I could not give him a chance to make a deep relationship with people. He is only 4 years old but should move and leave his friends in Chicago because of me.

In the Bible, there were people who moved a lot. They were Hebrews. In ancient times, people believed in many gods. People believed there were many gods,

and some of the gods were strong, and some of them were weak. And they defined the strong and weak of gods through the strength of the country. If a country or a tribe was strong, their god was considered a strong god.

The glory of our God had been spread to Egypt through Joshep. However, after about 400 years, Hebrews became the slave class in Egypt, and people lost the name of our God. While people lost the name of our God, Egypt was still the strongest country. People still believed that the gods and goddesses of Egypt were the strongest in the world. In this background, the no-named slave people defeated the strongest country, Egypt, and they became free and came out of Egypt. Hebrews were excited, and they saw the miracles of God. They saw that the God they had been crying out to for 400 years was working for them. They expected that they would be the strongest people in the world with God in the promised land.

However, what was the result? They wandered the wilderness for 40 years. They became people who represent “moving.” They moved about 40 times in 40 years. I just finished moving. I cannot imagine moving 40 times. If God had just let them move by themselves, I would think God was too merciless for them. But today’s Scripture says that “the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that

they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.” I believe God might want to teach Israel that their home was not the promised land but where God was with them.

I spent a night in the wilderness in Jordan with my wife during the mission trip. During the night, the tent was about to be blown out by the wind, and the wind blew the sand to the tent. We could not sleep well because of the noise of the sand wind. After that night, in the morning, we were covered by sand even though we were in the tent. The wilderness had a beautiful nature but was not a beautiful space at all during the night. This dangerous wilderness became Hebrew’s home because God was with them.

In today’s Gospel, we can read the story of Zacchaeus. The Bible says, “Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and was rich.” At that time, the Israelites thought tax collectors were sinners. This is because tax collectors sided with the Roman Empire and extorted money from their fellow people. The Bible says Zacchaeus was rich, which shows that Zacchaeus might have extorted lots of money from people. Zacchaeus was a sinner, but Jesus said, “Today salvation has come to this house.” Zacchaeus’s home became the home of salvation from the home of sinners when Jesus came to his house.

When I was in my early 20s, I attended a young adult camp, and I was greatly inspired by a speaker's preaching. This speaker had devoted his life as a missionary since he was young and had traveled to many countries. At the camp, he said he also struggled a lot to define his home. He said that during the travel, he found a place that was everywhere and had the same atmosphere wherever it was. He said it was "Starbucks." He went to Starbucks when he needed the feeling of home. He said Starbucks never changed wherever he was. After that time, I also became a big fan of Starbucks. It was true. Starbucks was everywhere in the world, and I could feel the same feeling at home at Starbucks. I could be comforted when I was in Starbucks. I became a slave of Starbucks and gave many offerings to Starbucks. I drank a cup of coffee at Starbucks every day and purchased many cups and tumblers at Starbucks.

When I realized that I had spent too much money at Starbucks, I started to think again about where my true home was. That time, God made me realize that 'my home is where God is with me.' Sometimes, I am still struggling with my identity issue. Some people say to me, "Wow, you can speak three languages!" Then I always answer, "No, I speak a total of one language. 1/3 Korean, 1/3 English, and 1/3 Chinese. So, total one." I should spend a lot of time introducing my story. And I should explain a lot about why I lived in China and New Zealand. However, even though sometimes the diverse experience makes me confused, I am sure that my

identity is that of a child of God. The kingdom of God is my home. And I believe that I could become a child of God, and the kingdom of God became my home because Jesus died for me. My home is where God is with me.

Where is our home? Is it Wisconsin? Is it Westby? Is it Westby United Methodist Church? I do not believe Westby is our home because we have lived here for a long time. I do not believe our Westby United Methodist Church is our church because we have been here for a long time. I believe Westby is our home because God is here. I believe Westby UMC is our church because God is with us in this church. Let us remember God was here whenever we were happy or sad. And I believe God is with us here to show God's glory to us. Let us expect God's glory and work at this our home. Amen.