

"God comforts us " Exodus 3:7-10 / John 11:17-35 (08/18/2024)

One day, about 15 years ago, one of my friends asked me a question. “Paul, let me ask one question because you are studying theology. Why did God give us the relationship? If God could work Godself, if God could directly be present in our lives, then, why did God let us be in a community and relationship with other people?” This time, my friend who asked me this question was in deep sorrow. She had a lot of struggles in her relationship with others. She was a very good person, so she had not had any relationship struggles before, but because of just one issue, people suddenly turned away from her and started to blame her. So, she was wondering why she should be in a relationship with people. If she could have a one-on-one relationship with God, why did she have to be in a community? At this time, I could not give her the answer. Because it was true, the relationship always brought some trouble. One of my church leaders also told me that the relationship is the most challenging thing in the church ministry. He said the church work was not difficult, but the relationship with others was so much more difficult. Through the relationship, my friend and my church leader had a lot of pain in their hearts. I also experienced difficulties in relationships. Then, why did God give us the system of relationships in our lives? That is because God chose the relationship to be with us. God is almighty. After God created the world, God created the human. The relationship

between God and the human started. This relationship was perfect and great. But because of the sin, this relationship between God and the human had been broken. And this broken relationship was restored through Jesus Christ.

Then, why did we suffer from the difficulties of relationships? Why did we have difficulties not only in our relationship with God but also with others?

In today's Scriptures, we can see God's character. In Exodus chapter 3, the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" This Scripture is the conversation between God and Moses. God revealed Himself to Hebrews after about 400 years. Before this conversation, God told Moses God's identity. God said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." After God revealed God's identity, then God said to Moses, "I have seen my people, and I heard my people's cry." God showed that God is God who is looking at us and listening to us. It is very interesting. God is almighty. God was able to terminate Egypt in just a second. God might have lots of ways to save Hebrews from Egypt. However, God chose a very complicated way to save Hebrews. God called Moses, had an argument with Moses, and took many times to save Hebrews. Also, before

God gave a mission to Moses, God said, 'I saw my people and heard my people.' Through this Exodus Scripture, God might want to let us know, 'I saw you and heard you,' which means God is with us.

Through Moses, we can see another God's character. Have you thought about why God chose Moses to save Israel? When Moses said, "No, I cannot do this," God did not say, "You can't? OK, I will pick another one. Go away from me." Or "I will do this myself if you cannot do this mission." God spent energy and had lots of conversations to send and to make Moses involved in God's work. Why did God do this much to make Moses follow God's order? I believe God called Moses because Moses was the person who empathized with the hearts of the Hebrews well. Exodus chapter 2 says, "One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people." Probably, Moses was too young to handle his emotions with wisdom. Even though the result was killing a person, it is true that Moses looked at the Hebrews' burdens and saw their suffering. God probably wanted to show that God is God who empathized with God's people. So, God might choose Moses to save the Hebrews from Egypt.

In today's Gospel Scripture, Jesus came to Lazarus to raise him again. But

before Jesus showed his miracle, Jesus wept. Why did Jesus need to weep? Jesus was surely able to raise Lazarus. When Jesus came to Lazarus, Martha said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Mary also said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Martha and Mary knew Jesus could heal the sick but did not know Jesus could raise the dead Lazarus. It would have been enough for Jesus if he had just shown “I am the resurrection and the life” to the people through the dead Lazarus. If I were Jesus, I would say, “Hey, let me show who I am. I am busy. I have no time. Just see what I am going to do.” But Jesus did not do that. Jesus wept. Jesus knew the grief of loss. Jesus empathized with people who were in grief.

Then, let’s go back to the question, “Why do we have difficulties in the relationship with God and people even though Jesus died for us?” I believe it is because we always try to find the answer through our relationship with God rather than seeing God, who sees us, listens to us, and empathizes with us.

When I could go to Hawaii to study the Bible, I was so excited because I really hoped to have enough time. However, once I started the study, I felt like I was in a deep tunnel that did not have any light. I only studied the Bible for nine months. I was not confident that I had made the right decision. My other friends moved

forward in their lives while I was studying the Bible. I was not sure that studying the Bible was the right decision to spend money and time.

This feeling was worse when I was volunteering at the school where I studied. The school's tuition was cheap, so each student should have volunteer work to run the school. My job was front gate security. The job name was Front Gate Security, but it was just a gate opener. I was in the hot and small booth to operate the open and closed switch every two hours daily. Those two hours were really challenging. My mind was so complicated. 'What am I doing here? Is it right? Am I doing right?' When I struggled with my concerns, I prayed to God. I asked God to show me if I was on the right path. But God's answer was, 'Paul, I am with you. I saw your pain. I listened to your concern. I know where you are.' In the small booth, I realized that I always asked God the answer rather than seeing who God was. I asked God the answer, but God gave me comfort.

God is here with us today. God is with us. We often forget that God is greater than our concerns. We often see our concerns rather than God, who sees us, listens to us, empathizes with us, and comforts us. Jesus died for us to restore the relationship between God and us. However, we often put God behind us in our lives. God is here today to comfort our hearts. God might not be interested in our concerns

because God is almighty and can solve the problem in a second. I am sure that God wants to talk with us about our broken hearts. God wants to comfort our hearts rather than solve our concerns. Today, I hope that God's comfort is with us. I hope we can experience the restoration through God's comfort. Amen.