

*“Give thanks for the inheritance of faith” Deut 6:4-9 / Acts 2:17 / Luke 18:15-17 (11/3/24)*

In November, we have the Thanksgiving Day. So, I think it is a good month to talk about “Thanks.” Through this month, I hope to talk about what Thanksgiving is for Christians.

“Give thanks for the inheritance of faith” is not the first topic people talk about when they talk about the thanksgiving of Christians. However, I hope to talk about giving thanks for the inheritance first because today is All Saints Sunday.

After I became a Christian, God called me to be a pastor for the church ministry. The senior pastor in New Zealand suggested I go back to South Korea for the seminary. After returning to South Korea, I prepared for admission to the seminary. When the application time was open, I had a bad cold. I thought the cold would be healed in a few days. However, my cold was still strong until the last day of the application. My parents were busy at that time, and they were not supportive of my dream to become a pastor. I should take public transportation for one hour to submit my application to the seminary.

I arrived at the seminary admission office near closing time. I was so sick

that I crawled from the subway station to the office. When I submitted the application, I saw another student who came with her father to apply. While I was doing the process myself, her father did the entire application process instead of her. And she was praying in the waiting chair. I was so jealous of her.

On the way back home, I complained to God. “Lord, if I cannot get support from my parents, couldn’t you make me not to be sick? Why do you give me this suffering on this important day?” On that day, my body was sick, but my heart was more painful than my body because I realized that I did not have the inheritance of faith.

When my father became a Christian, not being able to do ancestral ceremonies was always a burden on his heart. In Confucianism culture, serving ancestors is very important. My father had a duty to serve my family's ancestors as the first-born male. So, he had always struggled with ancestral ceremonies because the Korean church defined ancestral ceremonies as idolatry. One day, my father asked me about the memorial service. He learned that Christians do memorial services for their ancestors. So, he wanted to do a memorial service for my family’s ancestors. I was the first believer in my family, and I had never done a memorial service before, so I found some liturgies about a memorial service.

And I learned that a memorial service was designed to remember the faith of beloved family members who passed away. Obviously, I could not find any faith stories from my ancestors. So, I told my father that I could not prepare a memorial service for the ancestors. This is another sad story for my family, for we do not have any inheritance of faith.

In the Old Testament, there are two pillars of the Scriptures. One is Leviticus chapter 19, and the other is today's scripture, Deuteronomy 6:5. Wesley explained that all Christians should grow up toward the Perfection. He said that the perfect Christian is not a person who does not have any temptation, mistake, or weakness but is a person who loves God and loves neighbors. "Loving God and Loving neighbors" is the new commandment of Jesus. And this "Loving God and Loving neighbors" is also written in the Old Testament. Leviticus chapter 19 represents loving neighbors, and Deuteronomy 6:5 represents loving God.

Because Deuteronomy 6:5 is such a famous verse, I remember this verse all the time. However, I found one surprise thing while I was preparing today's sermon. After Deuteronomy 6:5, the Bible says in 6:6-7, "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you

lie down and when you get up.” The Bible emphasizes the inheritance of faith while talking about loving God. Our faith started with Jesus Christ. Our ancestors inherited faith, and it was passed down to us by our ancestors.

A few weeks ago, I read an article about the United States people. The article said that only 47% of American people identified themselves as religious. When I read this statistic, I was sad as a pastor and also upset as a first believer in a family. Christianity is not a traditional religion in Korea. Some people say Christianity came to Korea around 1592; some people say the early 1800s. However, Christianity officially came to Korea in 1885. So, Korean churches are still struggling with Korea’s traditional culture.

This United States is a blessed country. This country was built on Christianity. Many cultural things in the United States are based on Christianity. We celebrate Christmas and Easter. And we celebrate many seasons according to the church calendar. The United States has the inheritance of faith. But, people do not go to church. People do not believe in Jesus Christ. God prepared everything for the people in the United States. God gave good opportunities. God granted the United States the inheritance of faith, but people did not accept it.

Now, we say a lot about the next generation because many young people have left the church or do not come to the church. However, before we talk about the next generation, we should give thanks to God for the inheritance of faith. Because our ancestors passed down the faith to us and protected the church, we could have faith, and we could know the grace and love of God. Because our ancestors devoted their lives to our church and to God, we could be with God. We should give thanks for the inheritance of faith.

Today is All Saints Sunday. Here are the names of people who are already with God. By calling their names and lighting the candles, I hope to honor them. And I hope we can honor their dedication and contribution to our church for the inheritance of faith. Amen.