

“The Role Model of Our Faith” Colossians 3:12-17 / Luke 2:41-52 (12/29/24)

After I experienced the presence of God, I decided to live the life of a Christian well. However, the problem was that I did not know how I should live a Christian life.

One day, I learned that Christians should deliver the Gospel and make people come to the church. So, I tried to make my classmates come to my church at school. I asked one of my friends to come to my church. She was a very faithful Christian and was attending another church. She was laughing at me and explained to me about delivering the Gospel and making people come to the church. “Paul, making people come to the church does not mean just bringing people to your church. It means that make unchurched people and people who do not know Jesus come to the church.”

I learned another thing that Christians should pray. But I did not know how to pray. So, my church’s youth group friends and teachers taught me about prayer. I knew Christians should read the Bible, but I did not know how to read the Bible. I knew Christians should attend Sunday worship service, but I did not know how to worship God.

The Christian life was a totally new life for me when I started to believe in Jesus Christ. I was like a baby. The whole church family helped me to live a Christian life. My youth group friends and teachers spent a lot of time during the week. Sometimes, the youth group friends stayed overnight at my home to discuss faith. We talked about God and faith until the sun rise. Then, we went to the church for the early morning prayer gathering. At that time, I learned the danger of drowsy driving. I had experienced the presence of God, and I met Jesus Christ, but living as a Christian was a totally different and new world for me. I was raised like a baby in my church after I met Jesus Christ.

In the Bible, the Christians in the early church had the same struggles as me. About a few years ago, there was a movement in the church. Many churches pursued to return to the early church. The early church was an ideal model for modern churches. The early church had people who physically saw Jesus. They had faithful disciples of Jesus. They experienced the Pentecost Holy Spirit and shared their properties with the poor.

However, the early church in the time of the Roman Empire was unstable in terms of understanding Jesus Christ. Jesus gave the new commandment “Love God, Love neighbors” before ascending. So, the Christians in the early church did

not know how they should worship God, how they should consider Jesus, and how they should love people in detail. People who were following Jesus Christ started to argue with each other about their faith practices. Some Jewish Christians adapted Jewish traditions, practices, and theology to understand Jesus. Some Gentile Christians adopted many philosophies of Hellenism. Therefore, the early church was chaotic about the understanding of Jesus Christ.

Colosse was one of the cities where Christians had many struggles with the Christian faith. Colosse was the intersection of Eastern and Western cultures. So, Colosse was the center of many philosophies and religions. Some Christians of the Colossian church worshiped angels and followed other ideas while they followed Jesus Christ.

In this context, Paul wrote a letter to Colossians to teach Christians of the Colossian church about Jesus Christ. In today's Scripture, Paul said, "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." "As the Lord forgave you." Paul encouraged many Christians in the early church to do as Jesus did for them. Not only in this letter but also in many other letters, Paul taught Christians to live as Jesus did.

Jesus came to us. God came to us in the human body. Last week, I shared that Jesus came to us to live with us. And Jesus became our role model throughout his life. If Jesus had just come to us to be a sacrifice and for our salvation, I imagined that Jesus would not have had to stay with people for a long time. The crucifixion had just taken a day. And Jesus has risen again after three days. Probably, a week was enough to save us. But Jesus spent about 33 years with humans on the earth. Through this time of 33 years, Jesus showed us how Christians should live. He showed us how we should “Love God and Love neighbors.” Jesus came to us to live with us and to be the role model of our faith.

Then, while I was preparing today’s sermon, I had another interesting question. “Why did Jesus come to humans as an infant?” I imagined that if Jesus came to us as an adult, from the sky to the earth, people would believe he was the Messiah without any doubt. Then, why did Jesus choose to come to humans through the way of pregnancy and birth as an infant? I personally think there are two reasons why Jesus came to us as an infant. The first reason was to fulfill God’s promises that were written in the Old Testament. And the second reason is to show “growing up.” Luke said in the Gospel, “And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” When we think of Jesus’s life, we

imagine that Jesus called disciples, taught people about the kingdom of God, healed the sick, and showed many signs. However, we do not emphasize the time period of growth of Jesus Christ. Jesus had some time to grow up from an infant to an adult. I believe that, through Jesus Christ, God wanted to show us that we should grow up in our faith.

Growing up takes time. Growing up takes a lot of energy and effort. When I had my children, I was surprised that raising a child was much more difficult than I expected. As soon as the baby was born, the only thing the baby knew how to do was suck mother's milk. It is probably the minimum skill given by God for survival. I had to teach my children how to eat, how to walk, how to wear clothes, even how to poop. Growing up is a long journey that needs a lot of help and support.

I believe that growing up in the faith is the same. And Jesus became a role model for our “growing up” in faith. I was a baby when I had just started to believe in Jesus. My first church raised me with their love and support. They taught me how I should live as a Christian. Now, I have become a pastor and share the word of God with the people. However, I still believe I must grow up in my faith to do as Jesus did for me. And I experience growth of my faith in my life every year,

every month, and every day.

In this season of Christmas, I hope we think about the connection between the birth of Jesus and sanctification. Jesus became a role model of sanctification through his birth and growth. In today's Scripture, Paul said, "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." Paul encouraged the Colossian Christians to support each other in the church. The journey of growth cannot go alone. We are the church that walks the way of sanctification together. I hope our church can be the church that grows up together spiritually.

Today is the last Sunday of 2024. I hope we can look back at how much we have grown during 2024. And I hope we can start a new year with the presence of God in our lives. Jesus is the role model of our faith. I hope we continue our journey to be like our role model, Jesus, in 2025. Amen.