

"The Witness of the Holy Spirit" Romans 8:14-17, Matthew 10:16-20 (06/23/25)

When I first experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit, I also experienced the feeling of real and true happiness and joy that was from God. I had never felt that kind of happiness and joy when I did not know God.

After I experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit within me, my life situation remained the same. Everything was the same. I had to wake up early in the morning to go to school. The grass and trees on the way to school were still green. Birds made a loud sound as usual. However, I noticed a significant difference in myself. I was full of real happiness and joy. The world was so beautiful. The sky was beautiful, even the grass and trees were so beautiful, and the birds were singing. The birds were so noisy yesterday, but I could hear the sound was beautiful singing. I was so confident that God was with me at that time. I was not sure about the presence of God in me, but at that time, I was full of confidence that God was with me, and I was a real Christian who knew about Jesus.

However, this real happiness and joy did not last long. I do not remember whether it was just for 3 days or a week, but I am sure that the joyful feeling did not continue even for a week. My heart was full of complaints rather than the beautiful world. I raised my heavy body every morning to go to school. The grass was wet and made my shoes dirty. Birds made a loud noise, and it made my morning so busy.

When the joyful feeling did not last long, I was so disappointed in myself, and I lost my confidence in God's presence. I questioned myself a lot. "How can this joy given by God not last even a week?" "How can the assurance of God's

presence in me not last a week?” After this experience, this cycle repeated in my spiritual life. Happiness and complaints. Confidence and doubt. The more this process was repeated, the more exhausted I became. Later, I realized that I found the witness of the Holy Spirit from my feelings. When I began to have a different perspective on the assurance that the Holy Spirit was with me, my relationship with God became more stable, and I no longer suffered from the spiritual cycle.

Actually, understanding of the Spirit is very important for Methodists. Before John Wesley died, Wesley did not worry about decreasing the number of the church and Methodists in the world. But he worried that Methodists had lost their spiritual power as Christians, and just the shape of groups and churches remained. In more detail, he worried about the Methodists' lost Doctrine, Spirit, and Discipline. Therefore, understanding of the Spirit is so important for us not to be the church that only has the shape of the church.

According to Wesley's understanding, here the Spirit he mentioned does not only mean the Holy Spirit. It is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and our spirits. So, Wesley often used the word Spirit with a capital S to show the Holy Spirit, and used the word spirit with a small s to say humans' spirits. This means that if the Methodists lost the relationship between the Holy Spirit and our spirit, the Methodists would be a group of people who do not have any spiritual power.

So, we can find the witness, the assurance, of God's presence from God's Spirit and our spirits. Through this week and next week, I hope to talk about how we can have the assurance of God's presence, the assurance of the Holy Spirit in me. Today, I will talk about how we can know the Holy Spirit is with us through

God's Spirit.

Firstly, let us test ourselves to see if we can confess this sentence. "Jesus is Christ, my savior, the only Son of the living God." If we can confess this sentence, the Holy Spirit is surely with us.

Then, someone may be able to ask this question. "Pastor, this sentence is the basic confession of Christians. Anyone can say these words. How can we have the assurance that the Holy Spirit is in us just because we can confess this sentence?" Yes, this sentence is very simple and basic, and any Christian can confess it. However, confessing this sentence sincerely is not something that anyone can do. When I was a Buddhist, many Christians around me confessed this sentence and taught me this sentence. However, I really hated these words every time they talked about this sentence. "Christ, Savior, the only Son of God," I could not understand why Christians use those words. And I could not find any reason why I should say this sentence. I hated reading this sentence without thinking and even saying it out loud.

"Jesus is Christ, my savior, the only Son of the living God." This confession is very special for Christians. And we should not misunderstand, we can say this because we were saved. We can confidently say this, and we can say this confession with our true heart. Because the Holy Spirit has revealed to us what this sentence means, why this confession is joyful for us, and has allowed us to confess this sentence, we can confess that Jesus is the Christ, our Savior, the only Son of the living God. To those who do not know the Holy Spirit, this confession is the most foolish and powerless confession. But because the Holy Spirit makes us know everything, this confession is more precious to us than

anything else in the world.

Secondly, we can say God as our Father or parents. When I attended Kona UMC in Hawaii and shared that I hoped to be a pastor in the United States, the pastor of the church advised me to learn a lot about the United States culture. And she highly recommended seeing “Star Wars.” I had heard about Star Wars, but I had never watched any movies or dramas about it at that time. So, I started to watch all the Star Wars series with my wife. It was a very long and challenging journey. It was very difficult to watch a 1970s and 1990s movie in 2020. But even in those boring old movies, there is one scene that remains very vivid in my memory. That scene was, "I'm your father." The moment Darth Vader told Luke Skywalker that he was Luke's father, it became Luke's choice whether to call him father or not. Because Darth Vader said, “I’m your father,” Luke had a choice.

If someone wants to be my son and runs after me, calling me Daddy and Father, and I tell him that I never gave birth to him, that I don't know him, and that he is not my son, then my relationship with that person cannot be called the relationship between parent and child. Because God first called us God’s children, we can call God our Father and our parents. The reason we can call God our Father is that the Holy Spirit is with us.

In today’s Scripture, Paul said, “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” At that time, the conflict between Jews and Gentiles in the Roman church was so serious, but through the teachings of the Apostle Paul, the Roman church came to know that the Jews were children of God not because they were righteous or because of their ancestors, but because of the Holy Spirit, and that Gentiles, although they were Gentiles, could also become children of

God because of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if we can say, “God our Father, God our parents,” we can be confident that the Holy Spirit is with us.

It is true that our emotions and life circumstances are very important to us. We often confess our faith based on our feelings and the situation of our lives. When we feel very good and happy, we are very sure that God is with us, but when we are not happy or joyful, it seems like God is not with us. When everything we do is successful and goes well, we are very sure that God is guiding our lives, and when things are not going well and there are many problems in our lives, we feel like we do not know where God is. Jesus, who is Christ, our Savior, the only Son of God, died for us and rose again for us. No matter how we feel or what our situations are, Jesus gave his life for us and sent the Holy Spirit. The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is with us always. This week, I hope to encourage us to experience the witness that the Holy Spirit is with us in the very basics of our faith. I hope that we can experience God's amazing grace and love this week through the most basic confession of faith and calling God. And I hope we can have the heart of gratitude because God called us as children, and because we can call God our Father and Parents. Amen.