2017. 4.9. Palm Sunday

<Title> : “Lord’s Cross”

<Passage> : <Matthew 12: 20>

“A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out, Until He leads justice to victory.”

<Introduction>

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, members of over 10,000 branch churches in Korea and all over the world, local sanctuary members, those who are attending the service on the Internet worldwide, GCN viewing audiences, <children of Sunday school>,

Today is the Palm Sunday. Today about 2,000 years ago, Jesus went into the city of Jerusalem to become the propitiation, the lamb of Passover. He was coming down from the Mount of Olives to the city of Jerusalem riding on a colt. People surrounded and followed Him. On the road He was traveling were robes of people or palm branches that the people laid. Waving the palm branches in their hands, both children and grown adults shouted ‘Hosanna!’

Luke 19: 37-38 depicts this scene saying, “As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen, shouting: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”” Palm Sunday is the day to commemorate this event.

Also, Palm Sunday is the first day of the Passion Week to commemorate Jesus’s sufferings of cross. In just five days, this shout of Hosanna, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord” changed into a shout to crucify Him.

Brothers and sisters, the cross of the Lord tells us many things. Also, Jesus’s footsteps of the Passion Week contain many messages. Now, I’d like us to remember once again the meaning of the Lord’s cross based upon Jesus’s footsteps during the Passion Week. I pray in the name of the Lord that you will go through amazing changes through the love of the cross of the Lord.

<Main>

Dear brothers and sisters,

**The first meaning in the Lord’s cross is sacrificial love.**

God the Father gave out His only begotten Son to save the sinners, and Jesus sacrificed Himself. He forsook all the power and honor as God in origin and came to this earth in the form of a slave, taking the title of a sinner. He lived a poor life, and He spent all His time only for God and the souls.

He spent the last week before He took the cross, namely the last moments on this earth, also for the providence of salvation. Eventually, He poured out even the last drop of His blood while he hung on the cross. In order to fulfill the providence of salvation of the cross, Jesus gave up His ‘self’ completely.

What is the most difficult thing to cast away as a man who has physical body? It is the love for oneself. Seeking money, fame, and lust also comes from love for oneself. Jesus proved His true love for God and the souls by sacrificing Himself completely. He only followed the will of God and not His own thoughts or will.

His ‘self’ was not found in any of his words or actions. When He entered the city of Jerusalem, He rode a colt, the foal of a donkey to fulfill the prophecy of the Old Testament.

Zechariah 9:9 says, “Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” He only followed the will of God leaving behind recognition and love from the people.

The same goes for when He purified the Temple. On Sunday, the first day of the Passion Week, Jesus entered Jerusalem, and He went to the Jerusalem Temple on Monday. He drove out the merchants from the Temple and overturned the tables of the money-exchangers and those who were selling doves.

Such a contrast to the priests who were busy trying to gain the secular popularity and social positions! Jesus never compromised with unrighteousness because He only followed God’s will.

For this reason Jesus was severely persecuted from the authorities such as the priests and scribes. Brothers and sisters, those who follow the Lord, they will be hated by the world. In 1 Corinthians 4:13 Paul said he was persecuted as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, for preaching the gospel.

I also had to take up such things when I tried to follow the Lord as a pastor. I gave up my personal life completely to concentrate on prayer and fasting, and I preached about sin, righteousness, judgment and about deep spiritual realm. Because of that, only envy, jealousy, criticism, and persecution came to me.

But conclusively speaking, God raised me up and the church kept on growing. So many souls were led to salvation. Furthermore, many believers have come forth as God’s true children. So, I just follow the Lord even today giving thanks to God that I can dedicate myself completely for God the Father and the souls.

Now, how is it with you who have been saved and changed through the complete sacrifice of the Lord? Do you also live a life sacrificing yourself for the Lord and the souls? In this world, people love themselves increasingly more as the days go by. 2 Timothy 3:2 says, “For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant,”

So, we ought to give out the aroma of Christ by sacrificing ourselves more. Sacrifice is the true evidence of love. Just as salt has to melt away completely to make the food savory, the world will commend the church when the believers sacrifice themselves in their families, schools, or workplaces. Only then will your family members and relatives accept the gospel and the Lord when you preach the gospel to them.

Brothers and sisters, have you felt how precious and beautiful sacrificial love is? On Wednesday of Passion Week, Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus, came with a very costly oil of spikenard and poured it on Jesus’ head. About this, in Matthew 26:13 Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.”

Mary saved her expenses to buy the expensive oil of spikenard and poured it on Jesus without worrying about any misunderstanding or judging from other people.

Judas Iscariot criticized her saying they could’ve sold it for money and helped the poor. But this sacrificial love of one soul became such great comfort and strength to Jesus who was going to be beaten and torn by the hands of sinners 2 days later.

He’d have thought, ‘My sacrifice for the sinners is not meaningless. Here is a soul that feels my love and sacrifices herself, and there will be countless more like her, and I am grateful.’ Because He had humanity and physical body, He also felt pain and sorrow, and Mary’s act gave great comfort and strength to Him.

In Mark 14:8 Jesus talked about her actions, saying, “She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial.” How happy most of those who were with Jesus must have been when that place was filled with the aroma of the spikenard! Sacrificial love is something beautiful, which gives happiness to others and gives life.

The whole world became full of the aroma of love because Jesus sacrificed Himself. And that aroma makes us happy even today. I hope the aroma of Christ will fill every place, and the Lord’s love will be spread widely through your sacrifices. Also, through this, I pray in the name of the Lord that God the Father and the Lord will be comforted greatly.

Dear brothers and sisters,

**The second meaning in the Lord’s cross is the heart of the Father who takes the responsibility until the end.**

Isaiah 64:8 says, “But now, O LORD, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand.” Just as physical fathers will take the responsibility in raising their children, God did not only create human beings but He also takes responsibility for them until the end. He dedicates Himself until He leads us to Heaven. He is true Father who is good and full of love.

This love was manifested through Jesus, who came to this earth in human body. After purifying the Temple on Monday, He went into the Temple and taught the people on Tuesday. The high priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people came to Jesus and asked Him, “By what authority are You doing these things?”

They asked many questions to find fault in Him. Jesus tried to give them understanding through words of authority and parables. He wanted to save and lead to heaven not only those who were obedient and good but also those who were not.

Brothers and sisters, this love of the Father was constantly given to such a person as Judas Iscariot who sold his master.

When He was having the Last Supper on Thursday, Jesus tried to give Judas Iscariot a chance to turn from his ways. Jesus knew that Judas was already captivated by Satan and he couldn’t turn back. And yet, He looked at Judas with earnest eyes, wanting to tell him something like, “I know you will sell me out, but you can’t! Please turn from your ways!” In a situation where He was going to suffer a miserable death, He was worrying about His enemy.

Also, He planted faith in the disciples and asked them to love each other. John 13:1 says, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

After the supper, He went to Gethsemane to pray for those disciples that would be left on this earth and for all the souls that would follow the way of the Lord, namely for you and me. Of course, He also prayed for the taking of the cross. He prayed with all His strength that His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.

After He finished praying, He was arrested by the people who were brought by Judas Iscariot. The disciples were alarmed and fled. Jesus was taken to Annas, the high priest. Now, it had passed midnight and it became Friday.

Then Jesus was sent to Caiaphas the high priest, before Pilate, and then to Herod. He received many sufferings being taken to many places, and then He was finally sentenced to death by Pilate. Beginning sometime late Thursday night until around 9 a.m. Friday, He was taken here and there as he was questioned. He also received harsh scourging with so much contempt and mockery.

After that, He climbed up Golgotha carrying the cross, and six hours later He was hung on the cross and at around 3 p.m. He died. Even while He was shedding all His water and blood, Jesus prayed with His last strength. “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” He interceded for those who were crucifying and mocking Him.

Brothers and sisters, Jeremiah 3:19-20 is a soliloquy of God the Father toward Israel that had betrayed God and committed sins. “Then I said, ‘How I would set you among My sons and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of the nations!’ And I said, ‘You shall call Me, My Father, and not turn away from following Me.’ Surely, as a woman treacherously departs from her lover, So you have dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,” declares the LORD.

God loves so earnestly even those children who don’t understand His heart, or who very easily forgets the grace they received and treacherously departs from Him. As He said, “How I would set you among My sons,” He tries all His best not to lose even one soul.

He waits for His sons who are like the Prodigal Son, who are immature and have gone out to the world. And, if those sons came back after losing everything, He embraces them, puts good clothes on them, and feeds them with good food. He confirmed this love by sacrificing His first Son, namely His only begotten Son on the cross. Now, I hope you will feel this emotional love of the Father whenever you look at the cross.

Dear brothers and sisters,

**The third meaning of the Lord’s cross is the heart of the Father who wants to give us salvation and heaven.**

Still, many people of the world misunderstand the Father and the Lord as the fearful Judge. But as said in John 3:17, “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him,” the Lord’s cross is “salvation.”

John 14:2 writes, “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.” As written, the Lord’s cross is also “heaven.”

And as I understand this heart of the Father very well, it’s not an exaggeration to say that I am living a life just to lead you to heaven. I am enduring such harsh times to lead you to New Jerusalem among the heavenly dwelling places, where the Father’s and the Lord’s thrones are located.

During the past 35 years, whenever I saw the believers who said, “Senior pastor, please take me to New Jerusalem!” I always contemplated just how I could do it. And the answer given by God the Father is the space between the 1st and the 2nd floors of the shepherd’s castle. If you believe that the shepherd wants to lead you to New Jerusalem so very much, thereby being united in trust and love through your trust in his sacrificial love, namely the price that the shepherd is paying, then God allows you to dwell in my dwelling place.

Therefore, whenever you look at the Lord’s cross, I hope you will believe that you can also go to New Jerusalem through such love and try harder to change your heart.

<Conclusion>

Dear brothers and sisters, after all, what is it that the Father God and the Lord are telling us through the cross? It is love. It is the love with which He wants to give good things to His beloved children. He wants to save you from eternal punishment and instead give you eternal life. He wants to bring you into beautiful heaven and give you honor and glory. That’s what He desires. It is also the love of the Lord who willingly took the cross.

He continues to make sacrifices without any reservation today. From today, whenever you see the Lord’s cross, may you remember this love and change yourself more completely, and spread this love more widely, I pray this in the name of the Lord!