

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: We are the Church

Lesson: 2 Samuel 7:1-14 NRSV

7 Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ² the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³ Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

⁴ But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵ Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶ I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷ Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ⁸ Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹ and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. ¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he

commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings.

[Slide1] You have been on a journey of faith for a long time. Some have been going to church since birth with their parents or families, and some may have been to church by the calling of the Holy Spirit. Anyhow, you have been going to church for a long time. So, you are church experts. If someone asks you, “What is church?” How would you answer that question? Your answer is correct that Church is a place to worship and praise God. And, there are four marks of the Church: 1) Church is one, 2) Church is holy, 3) Church is catholic which means a place for everyone, 4) Church is apostolic. First, this means that we are one in Christ; we are the brothers and sisters and one family in Christ. This means that we love one another in Christ. The second: holy is distinct from the secular. The church is a place that is separated from the world because it is a temple where God is served. Next, the church is for everyone. Therefore, there are no boundaries or discrimination in the church. Finally, “the church is apostolic” means that we, as witnesses of Christ, follow the gospel and tradition in our lives.

[Slide2] God loved all people and still loves us. He called us to the church, and still calls us. And, he gave the power to become children of God to those who believe and confess Jesus as Christ. (John 1:12) Therefore, we are the children of God, not because we have special abilities, talents, or something special, but because He loved us unconditionally. Even if we read the Bible, and pray, if the Holy Spirit doesn’t touch our hearts, we cannot realize what we received from God and who we are. Our relationship with God begins not through blood, but through faith. This is because God looks on our heart. (1 Sam 16:7)

Let me briefly introduce my story. I was born and grew up in a Korean Methodist family. I was a pastor’s kid. When I was still a baby, my mother was writing her thesis at her seminary serving churches as an assistant pastor. My father was an ordinary office worker, but after feeling God’s call, he went to seminary and was eventually ordained as an Elder in 2006. I went to church every Sunday with them. So, I was very used to the church culture. I heard and learned about the love of Jesus Christ at church. Some call it a blessing to start a journey of faith naturally by parents. However, I didn’t think so at the time. Because I had not directly experienced the love of Christ

and been on the journey of faith, I always had questions and doubts about the presence of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

During the winter break before becoming a senior in high school, I had the first experience of the Holy Spirit. Back then, I participated in the Holy Spirit revival, which lasted for three days. And, on the first day there, I heard a testimony of a pastor's kid and his story challenged me because he confessed that God met him and that he had a direct relationship with God. I also grew up in Christian culture and was a pastor's kid, but I never felt I had experienced God directly. So, I decided to pray with all my heart to God because I really wanted to experience Him. On the second night, my heart suddenly felt warm while singing praise with Tongsung Kido, which means pray out loud. And, I had unexpected tears running from my eyes. I wasn't sad while I was praising rather I was very excited.

When the Holy Spirit touched my heart, all the doubts and questions I had were resolved, and I came to believe that God is alive and that He has always been with me. I also came to believe He loves me and sent Jesus Christ for me on the earth based on John 3:16. After this experience, my value of life totally changed, and I decided to live a life that pleases God.

Through the experience, I could feel that God really loves me. I believe that God loves all of us, and He meets us in different ways in our situations and in our lives. Even if some of you have not yet felt that God loves you, He loves you, is with you, and is calling you.

[Slide3] God calls all people, not because they have great ability, but because God loves them. Just as God has called us today, in the Old Testament, He called the Israelites. They were weak, and they seemed to be nothing special compared to others; they were even slaves in Egypt. However, God loved them and called Moses to be their leader and lead his people from Egypt. And right after the Exodus, God gave the Israelites the Law and the Tabernacle through Moses on Mount Sinai.

The tabernacle symbolically showed that God was with the Israelites whether they were in the wilderness or in Canaan. The visible tabernacle was made of wood, cloth, and leather, and it was only a temporary, movable building.

[Slide4] They had a long history of nomadic life, but David became their king and established Jerusalem as their capital, and they were also politically stable. (1) After the palace was built and David's heart felt at ease, David remembered the house of God. So he asks Prophet Nathan saying "I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." (2) He thought that it would be okay to put God, the source of blessings and grace, in the humble tent because God has blessed and protected them and kept them safe from all their enemies, and they are at peace, grace. Through today's scripture, we can see the understanding of the Israelites about the church.

David was a man who met and experienced the love of God. Those who feel God's love through the help of the Holy Spirit realize that they are sinners. So, they want to do anything for God. When David wanted to do something for God, He said to him through Nathan: "Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle." (5-6) This means that what God wants is not a big and fancy building, but the right life of an invisible child of God.

[Slide5] Beloved, God died for us. And God has risen for us. God was with us, is with us, and will be with us. Besides, he has given us the power to become his children. When we believe in Christ, the Holy Spirit abides in us. Galatians 2:20 (NRSV) tells: "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Christ lives in us. We are the church where Christ dwells. Therefore, our lives, like the four marks of the Church, are to treat each other believing that we are brothers and sisters in Christ, to be holy, not to hate or discriminate against anyone, and to follow and practice the Christian tradition as witnesses of Christ.

Beloved, God loves you. He calls you as sons and daughters. We are all children of God. May we treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ until the day we return to the dust, and may we invite the Holy Spirit into our hearts and He lives in us. May our lives pursue holiness and Christian perfection, and may we be kind to those we meet, and may we follow and practice our Christian traditions as witnesses of Christ. Amen.