

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

Title: Just Sow Seeds

Lesson: Galatians 3:23-29

²³ Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be reckoned as righteous by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Happy Father's Day! And, today is the second Sunday after Pentecost. From last Thursday to Monday, my family and I were in Green Bay for Wisconsin Annual Conference. It was the first face-to-face Annual Conference since the outbreak of the pandemic, so it was a meaningful event for everyone who participated. From Friday to Sunday, we decided the direction we should go in the future by voting on countless agendas. I can't list all of them as there were too many.

(Slide 1) And on Sunday afternoon there was a worship service of Ordination and Commissioning. And officially I was commissioned by Bishop Jung as Provisional Elder. This means that I've taken the first step toward being ordained as an Elder. As you can see in the picture, the candidates are received a red stole during the service. And all of ordained pastors remember when they were anointed by the Holy Spirit by wearing red stoles and participating in worship. Maybe you remember the pulpit color of Pentecost Sunday. It was red because red symbolizes the Holy Spirit.

The Conference gives red stoles to the ordained pastors because the stoles symbolically show that they have been anointed by the Holy Spirit. I will also go through the next three years of training to be ordained as an Elder. Next month I have a workshop at Pine Lake, which lasts for 3 days and 2 nights. And I know that there is a regular meeting of candidates, either online or

face-to-face, almost every month. So, I need your prayers for this training. Please continue to pray for this process of ordination.

Personally, Commissioning meant a lot to me. 11 years ago, I was a sophomore in college. My major was the Philosophy of Religion, and I was discerning my vocation. And in the spring semester, I took a class by chance called An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Ministry. The class was taught by a retired pastor who served The United Methodist Church in New Jersey for 40 years. At the time, I wasn't very interested in ministry and being a pastor, and I had no idea that I would become a pastor in the future, but it was fun to study another culture during the semester. One of the best things I liked from the class was the assignments because they were so easy. All I had to do for the assignments was talk to someone from another culture for about an hour a week, write down what I learned from him and submit it.

(Slide 2) At the end of the semester, the pastor who taught the class asked the students: “Friends, You think it is possible to learn cross-cultural ministry at your desk? I believe you have to go into a different culture and experience if you really want to learn Cross-Cultural Ministry. If any of you can purchase a plane ticket to the U.S. for yourself, during this summer break I will be responsible for all of your expense in the states for one month. I will fully support you to experience and learn cross-cultural ministry for a month, so I hope that anyone apply.” He suggested the students to experience a wider world than Korea in the states and Haiti for a month. He told us that if we just buy a flight ticket, he would fully support us with everything we need for a month in the United States. So, 5 students, including myself, stayed in the U.S. for a month. One funny thing was that the pastor didn't come to the states with us because he had different schedules in China. His wife was also planning a trip to China with him, but when she prayed, she said that the Lord gave her a heart to decide to be our guide of our trip in the states, so she cancelled her trip to China. Actually, she served us hard and gave us a lot of rides. And she planned and booked everything for us.

One of the things I still remember was the house we stayed in on our first day in New Jersey. The house was very huge and had three stories, and the house even had an elevator. I still remember the green grass in the front yard and

the smell of that day outside. We have experienced New Jersey and New York and Boston. When I saw the Statue of Liberty and Time Square in NY that I had only seen on TV, I was so amazed. I experienced the multiple races, and the multiple cultures for the first time in my life.

And although the pastor was not with us, he already contacted his colleagues and friends to let us spend two weeks in their home and experience how Americans live. And every Sunday we participated in the White Church service, the African American church service served by a Korean pastor, and experienced the Korean Immigration church service. I should add one more thing about fireworks on 4th of July. That trip was my first American experience, and everything was so nice. We said to each other: "This kind of chance will never come again in our life."

Frankly, until then, I had no idea if I would be living in the states, serve Cross-Cultural Ministry, or become a pastor.

Since I came to the United States in 2018, I have only occasionally emailed the pastor's wife, who had planned, guided, and served us for a month. After I was commissioned, when I emailed her to let her know my news, she was very happy and said: "When my husband decided to fully support his students without consulting me in advance, I had a lot of anxiety and worries so I couldn't sleep well for several days. But while I prayed, the Lord said to my heart: "Go and serve them."

11 years have passed since then. She planted her seeds obeying God's call. And the Holy Spirit gave the seeds soil and sunlight and water. And one of that seeds grew 11 years later as a pastor serving cross-cultural ministry in Wisconsin. Two of the five students who traveled together at the time are currently in states. One is serving the Willow River Parish in WI, and the other one is studying at Garret-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Chicago.

Isn't it amazing? Back then, none of us knew. Even I didn't know that 11 years later I would be serving Willow River Parish in Wisconsin. Back then I never thought I would become a pastor. However, God has been working in my life before I know it and has brought me here. This is my story and my testimony.

As I mentioned earlier, my training to be ordained starts from next month. It is a training that lasts three years. I will pray for that training, for God's calling, and go where the Holy Spirit leads, but at the same time I need your prayers and support.

Being ordained and being anointed by the Holy Spirit means to receive the Holy Spirit. So, what does that mean to receive the Holy Spirit? To receive the Holy Spirit means to have faith. What does that mean to have faith? To have faith means that Jesus Christ has saved us from sins and death.

Before Jesus came, people followed the law because they believed it could save them. However, the law was not perfect. They focused on the law itself rather than the essence of the law. So, while they followed the law, they judged, discriminated, and distinguished others.

(Slide 3) Those who believed in the Law discriminated between Jew and Greek, between slave and free, and between male and female. But, what did Jesus Christ do in this earth? Let's all read verse 28: "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

The anointing and the Holy Spirit are not just for pastors, but for all of us. Siblings in Christ, receive the Holy Spirit; accept the Holy Spirit as the Lord of your life; walk the path led by the Holy Spirit; listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to your heart and obey. This is because the way to follow the Holy Spirit is the way of truth and the way of life.

When the Lord said to you, "Sow seeds, or do something" just obey to the Holy Spirit, and don't worry about anything. Just obey and sow the seeds because the Holy Spirit will provide what you need and let them grow. Leave all your burdens and baggage on the Holy Spirit, and I hope you just walk the path of love, the path of life, and the path of truth.

May the Holy Spirit bless all of us and accompany during this journey of faith so that the seeds we sow will bear fruit abundantly in our lives. Amen.