

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

### **Title: Beyond the Visible**

### **Lesson: 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 NRSV**

*<sup>13</sup> But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and so we speak, <sup>14</sup> because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. <sup>15</sup> Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.*

*<sup>16</sup> So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, <sup>18</sup> because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.*

*5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

**(SS1)** Apostle Paul is a very important person in the New Testament. His conversion story is very famous to all Christians. He was a persecutor of Christians before his repentance. But, after he met Jesus Christ in his life, his life and life values were totally changed, and he was always positive and an evangelist of hope. There are as many as 13 of his letters in the Bible. We call it Paul's letters. What are some of the letters?

**(SS2)** 1) Galatians, 2) 1 Thessalonians, 3) 2 Thessalonians, 4) 1 Corinthians, 5) 2 Corinthians, 6) Romans, 7) Colossians, 8) Philemon, 9) Ephesians, 10) Philippians, 11) 1 Timothy, 12) Titus, 13) 2 Timothy.

2 Corinthians we read today as our scripture reading is one of Paul's letters. We know Paul was always positive from verse 16: “So we do not lose heart.”

He didn't lose heart under any circumstances, but rather he praised God because he met the resurrected Jesus Christ, and experienced the resurrection of Christ. We sometimes encounter the difficulties of life and have concerns and worries, and

feel uncertainty coming from life. But, Christians who met the resurrected Jesus Christ and experienced the resurrection of Christ in life are not in despair because the Holy Spirit is always with us and protects us, giving new strength and new energy. I pray in the name of the Lord that all of you in the sanctuary believe this.

**(SS3)** The congregation of the Corinthian church was not much different from us. They had worries and concerns in their lives. Most Koreans live with a lot of worries and concerns about life. Korean parents worry about their children's health, whether they can go to good colleges, whether they can marry a good person, or whether they can get a good job. I didn't feel these worries before I got Evan, but sometimes I worry about him when he doesn't poop all day, sometimes I worry about him if he doesn't eat well. Corinthian church members also had a lot of worries and concerns about life like us, and also, the fact that they believe in Jesus threatened their lives, so they wondered if it was right to believe in Jesus. So they asked Paul about their worries, hardships, and concerns. Paul explained why he is not discouraged in today's scripture.

#### 1) **(SS4)** Outer nature versus Inner nature

The Bible is very interested in the belief that humans overcome when they encounter hardships. In Psalm 116:10 and 12, the Bible tells that "I kept my faith, even when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted'.....What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?" (NRSV)

**(SS5)** Corinthian church members ask Paul why life is not easy and stable. So he reminds them that we all are fragile beings like clay jars. The Bible also calls us fragile clay jars, "We have this treasure in clay jars." (7a) Nevertheless, Paul encourages people like fragile and humble clay jars saying, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." (8-9) We are weak and vulnerable like clay jars, but not crushed because all extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. (7b)

Although we are fragile clay jars, we have the knowledge of the glory of God and our inner nature. This treasure is our faith believing in and confessing Jesus as Christ. Clay jars that contain this treasure are never broken. Paul emphasizes that the true treasure is the death of Jesus and the life of Jesus in our bodies, saying

“Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.” (10)

Our bodies grow old and return to dust. But, we not only have bodies, but also souls. Everyone has their outer nature and inner nature. In response, Paul tells, “Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.” (16) What we physically experience in the earth is temporary and forgotten, but our inner nature is eternal, abundant, and full of great glory.

## 2) (SS6) Visible versus Invisible

Paul contrasts the visible with the invisible: the temporary with the eternal. The pains, sufferings, hardships, and trials we may experience in life comes to us great at the time, but they are not eternal.

Faith in Christianity is what we believe even if we can't see it. Paul tells that “because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.” (18)

The Bible says that if we focus on only physical and visible things, we cannot have abundant life beyond that. In Gospel Luke chapter 12:19-20 NRSV, A rich man says, “My soul, you have ample good laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry,” but God says to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” This parable tells us what the true abundant life of inner nature is.

We should not focus on visible things, but invisible. We should not focus on our outer nature, but inner. We should not focus on temporary things, but eternal. I hope we live for abundant life and eternal life, then all crisis and reality before our eyes will all pass. A life full of Christ and filled with grace is hidden and invisible, but this is the true inner nature.

## 3) (SS7) Earthly tent versus Eternal house

Today's scripture reading tells that “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (5:1)

In Christianity, when people talk about hope, they always talk about death. According to Genesis, humans were already sentenced to death by God: “By the

sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Gen 3:19 NRSV) Our deaths have already been determined before we were born. Nobody can be free from this death. When we only think about our bodies and outer nature, our lives become so vain because everything is old, gone, and dead. But believing in the resurrection of Christ means that we stay in God’s eternal house.

Looking at the cross means facing death. Paul talks about not just looking at the cross, but looking with a heart of faith: “Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence.” (14) He is saying a life of faith. It is a promise that if our lives combine with Jesus Christ, we will live as a life of resurrection from now on. The abundant life is in Jesus. This is based on the word of God’s promise. The Lord came to give us abundant life and the salvation of life. John 10:10 NRSV tells that “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” In the light of the resurrected Lord, even the cross, the tool of death, was a symbol of hope. When the Lord, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit touch our minds and hearts, all concerns and worries we have change to hope and joy.

**(SS8)** Many people have suffered from COVID-19 all over the world for a long time. Many people lost their lives, were sick, and lost their jobs. On my Sabbath day, I went to the Twin cities with my family and saw protesters from afar. Our society is always full of issues. Of course, there is good news, but there is also a lot of news that makes us worry. I assume that each of us has our own worries and concerns. But beloved Willow River Parish, what I’m encouraging to you is “believe in the resurrection of Christ and the life of resurrection”. I believe that the Holy Spirit will touch and change each of your hearts just as Paul met Christ and his life was totally changed. This is not forcing you to cheer up in tough situations. We cannot do it on our own strength. We cannot change our concerns to positive things on our strength. We cannot even love and forgive others on our strength. They are possible by only the Holy Spirit. They are possible when the Holy Spirit touches our minds and hearts. They are possible by the help of the Holy Spirit. So, **(SS9)** what should we do? We should leave all our worries and concerns to the Lord, pray to God that the Holy Spirit touches and protects your minds, and walk humbly with God. Amen.