

Good morning SEM!

Usually you only hear me preach once a week, but this week, if you were at our **Christmas party** on Wednesday, you get to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ twice this week. I say the more Good News, the merrier. So we had Merry Christmas at the **Christmas party**. We met **new people** and ate great food and most importantly heard a true Christmas sermon! Praise God for all His blessings!

Speaking of Christmas and sermons, the last Sunday of this year falls in between Christmas and New Year's Day, so **Today's sermon starts with the theme of Jesus' First Coming – When Jesus was born -- and end's with the theme of Jesus's Second Coming – when He will make all things new.**

Two thousand years ago, an angel declared in Bethlehem: **"I bring you good news of great joy for all people; for today there has been born for you a Savior"** (Luke 2:10,11). Immediately after that announcement of good news, a multitude of heavenly host praised God, saying, **"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased"** (Luke 2:14). That one, whom God was pleased, was none other than Jesus, who at that time was just a newborn baby. In fact, His birth was such great news at that time that even the angels would long and stoop down to behold - and even rejoice at - the infant, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. Why such a big fuss over a baby's birth? Well, to answer the question, we need to go back to the very beginning.

In the movie and in the soundtrack of **the Sound of Music**, Julie Andrews sings, Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start. Doh Reh Me ... Sorry! 죄송합니다! 재가 음치라서 ... 실례했습니다. Now you know why I'm not in the choir.

Now with Christmas, if we truly want to understand the story, we must start at the very beginning to give us context of why God sent His Son to us.

Why did God send Jesus to us? If you remember from the Scripture Reading from last week's sermon, God sent His son to save sinners.

"She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because He will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21)

But did God make us His people with sin. Did we start as sinners from the very beginning?

To answer that question, **Let's start at the very beginning, ...**

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth **GOOD**. In Genesis 1, God uses "good" to describe all of His creation 7 times:

In Genesis 1:4,
God saw that the light was **good**,

In Genesis 1:10,
God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was **good**.

Genesis 1:12 says,
The land produced vegetation: ... And God saw that it was **good**.

Genesis 1:18 says,

to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was **good**.

Genesis 1:21 says,

So God created the great creatures ... and every winged bird ... And God saw that it was **good**.

Genesis 1:25 says,

God made the wild animals ..., the livestock ..., and all the creatures And God saw that it was **good**.

Genesis 1:31 says,

God saw all that he had made, and it was very **good**.

Unfortunately, this soon changes. God commands the first man,

“but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Gen.2:17

Long story short, Adam, our federal head, chooses to sin resulting in God driving mankind out of the Garden.

Romans 5:12 explains the ramification of Adam’s fall:

“... sin entered the world and death through sin and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Romans 5:12.

Not only was this bad news for Adam and Eve, it is equally bad news for us all.

As Adam and Eve were being cast out of the land, it must

have been a very sad day.

They were excluded from God's land and they would surely die.

However, God makes a promise to Adam and Eve: One day He would send a seed (an offspring) to crush the head of Satan:

And I [God] will put enmity
between you [the serpent] and the woman,
and between your [serpent's] offspring/seed and hers
[woman's offspring/seed];
he [offspring of the woman] will crush your head,
and you [offspring of the serpent] will strike his heel." (Gen.
3:15)

This same promise was later given to the father of faith Abraham (Gen. 12, 15, 17, 22):

I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply ***your offspring*** as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. ... ***in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ...*** Genesis 22:15-18

Who is this promised seed that would crush Satan's head and bless all the nations? The New Testament reveals that this seed is Christ: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed ... [not] referring to many [seeds], but rather to ONE ... that is, Christ" (Gal. 3:16). To give us this seed, God in Christ partook flesh and blood, sharing in our humanity.

Since the children have flesh and blood, He (Jesus) too shared in their humanity so that by his death He might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ... For this reason He (Jesus) had to be made fully human in every way, in order that He ... might make propitiation for the sins of the people...

Heb. 2:14-18.

Can you believe that He shared in our humanity – that He took on flesh and blood? On Christmas, God in Jesus was born like a weak, helpless **baby** – just like you and I were born as a baby. Why would He do that? Look at the pix: A baby has flesh and blood, just like you and me. Hebrews 2 says,

“He had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
Heb. 2:17

You see **Only ripped flesh and spilt blood can propitiate sin: “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”**
Heb. 9:22

And so Jesus’ body – His flesh -- was ripped and his blood spilled for you, for your salvation, for your life.

But why flesh and blood for life? Answer: **The Life is in the Blood**

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement/propitiation for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul. Lev. 17:11

The life is in the blood, and that blood propitiates our sin.

1 John 2:1,2

But if anyone does sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, **Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is the propitiation for our sins ...**

Pay attention to two words: advocate and propitiation.

Jesus Christ is the Advocate

παράκλητος

Definition: an advocate, intercessor, an *attorney* (lawyer), a consoler, comforter, helper

Derived from two words: *pará*, "from close-beside" and *kaléō*, "make a call"

-- called to one's aid (a *legal advocate* who makes the right judgment-call--

So Jesus is our legal intercessor/advocate/attorney in court.

Jesus Christ is the Propitiation

ἱλασμός

Transliteration: hilasmos

Phonetic Spelling: (hil-as-mos')

Definition: propitiation

-- To appease, satisfy the righteous wrath of God for our sins.

And how did Jesus appease and satisfy God's righteous wrath for our sins? He suffered and died on the cross.

So let me ask this question, why Jesus? Why couldn't someone else die for our sins.

A case in point: Church, I know you are all sinners. If Jesus were to come again and judge everyone here on Judgment Day, could Jesus let you enter heaven – as a sinner – without the blood of Christ. No! Because nothing unholy – nothing with sin can enter God's holy presence.

Then, if you cannot enter heaven with your sin, could I say to God, "I know that they are all sinners and I know that you are a holy God, set apart from sin. So God, because I love the members of my church, so much, I am willing to take their sin, I will take their punishment, so now please let the members of my church into heaven?"

Would God accept my offer? Would God say okay Joshua, you can take their punishment and I will let them into heaven?
Would God permit this exchange?

No! Why no? Because God will say to me, You Joshua are just as sinful as they are – you cannot pay for their sins.

A debtor cannot pay off the debts of another debtor. Only someone who can afford to pay for another person's debt can pay for a debtor's debt. In the same way, a sinner cannot pay for the sins of another sinner. Only a righteous one can pay for the sins of another sinner.

Hence, I have no choice – I cannot pay the penalty of another sinner because I too am a sinner. Only Jesus -- who was and is without sin -- can pay for the penalty of sinners.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are— yet he did not sin. Heb. 4:15

Remember Jesus was tempted for 40 days in the desert, but He did not succumb to sin.

So as the sinless -- spotless -- holy lamb of God, only His blood can take away the sins of the world.

1 Peter says,

... you were redeemed with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ ... through Him, [we] are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 1 Peter 1:18-21

And so it is through Jesus' perfect obedience to the Law, Christ merited the title - the Righteous *One*.

“Righteous *One*” excludes the rest of us, however. In order for us to stop relying on our good works for our

righteousness, we must realize that ONLY *One* is righteous, only *One* is holy, only *One* is victorious over sin, death and Satan. That *One* is none other than the spotless lamb – Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, “Here I am ... I have come to do your will, O God” (Heb. 10:5,6). It is by Jesus’ will - His obedience - that we sinners who trust in Christ for our righteousness are declared righteous by a Holy God. That is why only Christ, the obedient Adam, has the power to break the curse that was placed on first Adam and the rest of humankind. Christ is the promised Seed that renders Satan powerless and destroys death so that we can be born again into eternal life.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

In a few days, it will no longer be 2019. We will enter a new year, 2020. Brothers and sisters, I want you to reflect on the sins you committed in 2019 and the ramifications – the ripple effects -- your sins had on others. Trust me, you only know or will perhaps admit to at best 1% of your sins and their consequences on others. We go through our day ignorant of most of our sins – or better yet -- ignoring our sins. I implore you, do not do that. With a repentant heart, instead confess your sins to God – all of them – even the ones you do not want to admit! Do not bring your sins into the new year!

You know, many of our sins is a result of our attachment to the world and what it has to offer. We Koreans love money way too much! We love status! We love material things! The 10th commandment says do not covet, but do we not covet and compare ourselves to others? Do we not lust after material things others have? The material things of the world?

1 John 2:15-17

Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world and the desires of the world pass away, but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

So church, do not get so attached to this world. Yes, we are part of this world and we should do our best to improve this world, for God has put man in charge to be stewards of this world. But we have to understand that we live in a sinful world, a world full of sinful people. Therefore, we will always have problems related to sin – we've had problems of sin since Adam's fall and we will have problems in this world till the end. We will never be able to create a utopia with our hands, for all of us have dirty, bloody hands – hands quick to shed blood. So instead of placing our hope in this world, let's place our hope in the world to come -- as did Abraham, the man of faith:

By faith he lived as an alien ..., as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Heb. 11:9,10

In this passage, it says that Abraham, with Isaac and Jacob, dwelt in tents. Why did Abraham live in tents – why tents? Have you ever slept in a tent? Do you sleep in a tent thinking this is your permanent home? I remember, 2 years ago, I bought a small tent for 15,000 won (\$15). I bought the cheapest tent, I could find and I took it to Jeju Island and to save money on accommodation, I pitched my tent at the base of Mount Hallasan. That night, I felt like a homeless person – it was cold, the tent was too small for me, there were bugs everywhere, and my back was in pain because I could feel the hard ground below me. The next day, I threw away my tent and checked into

a hotel. You see, a tent is temporary.

Abraham lived in a tent on earth because Abraham and his progeny Isaac and Jacob -- both fellow heirs of the same promise -- considered their stay on earth temporary. They considered themselves foreigners, strangers on earth – pilgrims on their way -- looking forward to the city not made by the hands of man but the city made by God.

... but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. ... But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. Heb. 11: 13-16

Church, do not get so attached to this world. If you love this world so much, God may leave you here and not raise you to Heaven. No, look forward in faith and in hope – just as Abraham and his heirs -- to the city He has prepared for people of faith, a better country; that is, heaven – the kingdom of God that we will one day enter.

So Church, we are pilgrims on the way! This world, this country Korea, this city Seoul is not our final destination.

Do not place your hope in it, for it will pass away.

Our hope is in heaven – made new – by His hands.

Jesus says,

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation and troubles. But be of good cheer! I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

Yes, we will go through difficulties, troubles, and tribulations in this world! But be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world and the world will one day be no more, for

**It is has been prophesied,
Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new
things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of
them.” Isaiah 42:9**

Jesus says,

“Behold, I am making all things new.” Revelation 21:5

**As we enter the new year, let us repent of our sins, and
have hope in the Gospel, for Jesus will come again for us
and will make all things new!**

Praise God!

Let us pray!