

I'd like to start the sermon with a True or False question.  
True or False: We are family!  
How many say true? False?  
Because God is our Father,  
And we are his adopted children through our faith in Christ.  
Christ has redeemed, so yes we are family.

... we were in slavery ... But ... God sent his Son, ... born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are ... God's child. Gal. 4:3-7

So because we are family, we are all eternal brothers and sisters in Christ!  
And if you are young, you can even consider someone like Elder Keum or Deacon Kim, your father.  
You can consider someone like Angie, or Anna or Laura or HyonSuk 집사님, your mom.  
And they can consider you, their son or daughter.  
Or you can call someone young like my wife or someone like Eugene or SonYoung, your sister.  
You see we are family.  
And in this way, we are a family church!  
That doesn't mean we are a church full of families.  
Most of us are not here with actual family members.  
But we are a church full of people you can call brothers and sisters, and fathers and mothers – all because of our adoption in Christ's family.

Now ideally, at church, we should have people of all ages represented -- both young and old.

But if you look around, we are underrepresented in the younger age groups – children, teenagers, and people in their 20s.

In heaven, however, all age groups – in a sense -- will be represented, so my desire is that our church reflects heaven.

I hope our church will one day diversify into all age groups – young and old.

Now the reason I have started my sermon this way is that I have a heart for the church and her health and her growth.

Nonetheless, over the past few decades, I have seen first hand, as well as in statistical research, some disturbing trends that just tears my heart apart.

20,30,40 years ago, there was a huge surge of Koreans attending church, but over the past 10, 15 years, we see a complete change.

Let's look at some **Current Trends in Korea**

- In Korea, about 30 years ago, approximately 40% of South Korea's population considered themselves Christian.
- Today, only 18% are Christian, but this figure is misleading because a high percent of these professed Christians are members of heretical groups.

- To add fire to the flame, in large part because of the secular media, hatred towards Christianity has risen steeply.

A lot of this bad publicity, has been sparked by bad pastors involved in scandals and bad churches making false prophecies and false promises.

These trends are also taking place in the US. Let's look at

### **Some Shocking Trends of Christianity in the US**

It feels like just yesterday that America was once considered a Christian nation. They used to send the most missionaries globally. But today that is no longer the case.

- 40 – 50 years ago, 70% of Americans teenagers faithfully went to church.
- But today, according to various surveys, 60% to 95% of people who grow up in the church leave the church during their college years or soon thereafter.
- And we know this trend is similar in Korea. I actually take surveys with my college students every year and the percentage of college attending church seem to decrease every year.

Why are young people leaving the church in droves?

- Is it because church is not fun enough, hip enough, cool enough, entertaining enough, relevant enough, experiential enough, etc.?

No, not at all. We can actually now look at the

**History of the contemporary Church (US and Korea) for answers.**

- In the 1970's in the US and 1980's in Korea, there was a dramatic change in the message and worship (gearing towards young people).

young people)

There were:

Subtle changes in the messages from the pulpit: The Gospel was replaced with practical self-help, moralistic (Aesop's fables), therapeutic, entertaining messages.

There was a Rise of mega churches (9 out of the top 10 largest mega churches located in Korea) that rely on research-based techniques to attract "seekers." (ex. Yoiedo Full Gospel church and Willow Creek)

The result of these mega churches in Korea like Yoiedo Full Gospel church has recently been marked by scandal, for example, the embezzlement of an enormous amount of money by the senior pastor and his son, giving Christianity a negative image in the media.

Willow Creek Community Church – one of the largest churches in the US -- conducted a survey among their church members and they discovered that those who attended their church the longest were the ones who were the most likely to leave the church and leave Christianity.

If we look at the general **Changes to the face of Christianity over the past 30, 40 years.**

- The message from the pulpit has progressively centered around me and my personal Christian devotion/piety rather than Christ and His work – the Gospel.
- Trends in Worship: there has been a move away from solemn Scripture-based hymns and psalms to more contemporary themes and worldly styles -- pop and rock Christian music; entertainment/concert style atmosphere (lighting, stage presence, rock-and-roll instruments) became the norm.
- New styles focus more on the self (What I can do) rather than on God (What He has done).

So we need to ask the question, **What sparked this contemporary movement?**

- In the 70's and 80's, elders wanted to increase the number of young people attending church. (Some cities in the US had over 70% of their young people attending churches – “Let's make it 100%! How can we do it? Let's appeal to the masses.”)

What did the masses want? What did young people like? They like secular music, they love rock and roll. It was the craze of the 50's, 60's, 70's so what did these leaders of the church say, “let's bring rock and roll into the church!” and now it's the main way to worship today.

After 40 years of this contemporary movement invading our service, we seriously have to ask this question:

**Has this man-made movement failed or succeeded?**

- Young people's attendance in church over the decades has dropped dramatically.
- Silent exodus in the church.
- Why Silent? Mega churches give off the appearance that the church is growing; there is “real revival” they say – but the mega churches are usually the last stop before young people leave the church completely.
- Lots of hype but no revival, no overall growth – in numbers and in spirit.

**Ramifications of the Christian Contemporary Movement**

- Christians are abandoning their faith at alarming rates.
- Cynicism and antagonism towards Christianity is escalating (the most bitter are former churchgoers, mostly from Charismatic, Pentecostal, Health, Wealth and Prosperity circles [usually due to false promises])

- Seminaries are dwindling in numbers or even closing, or becoming liberal or secular to attract even non-Christians.
- Growth of heretical movements
- **What can we do to prevent young Christians from leaving the church?**
- Repent! (Repent from our sins and repent from turning to man-made methods and messages rather than God's.)
- Go back to God's method: proclaiming the Good News – the Gospel. This is how Jesus, His disciples, Paul, and the early church did it, and so should we!
- Give young people a strong foundation based on the Gospel so that when the storms of life attack their faith, they will be able to stand strong on solid ground.

So brothers and sisters,

Let's do it God's way,

not our way!

All we need to know is Christ Crucified – The Gospel.  
Let's go back to the Gospel.

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 1 Cor. 2:2

Man's wisdom and techniques is what the church has trusted in for the past several decades. We have done it our way, not God's way and our way has left us with a weak, dying church, with people leaving the church in droves.

It's time we repent, and start doing church His way!

Let us leave our man-made messages and techniques and go back to the message of Christ – the Gospel.

**It is written,**

[Christ] we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. Col.1:28-29

There is power in the Gospel – and through the Gospel -- Christ can powerfully work in you.

So if we stick to Christ's original message -- His Gospel -- I believe we can reach out to young people and they will desire to worship in church all the days of their lives.

Unfortunately, the message of a bloody savior on a cross - - our need for forgiveness of our sins -- is seldom preached in the modern church.

Today, on an average Sunday, the Good News is usually absent in the sermon.

I pray that God will bring a surge of Gospel preachers back to Korea, the US and Canada, all over the world. Let us pray for that the next generation of preachers will be faithful in preaching the Gospel from the pulpit – every Sunday, every Sunday!

Brothers and sisters, you know that, every Sunday, I have preached the Gospel to you.

And this Gospel preaching has produced good fruit in many of you.

I'm so glad to tell you that just recently, I received good news from a friend whom I consider like a younger brother.

He attended an English-ministry at one of the largest Korean churches in the US. Unfortunately, like most young people his age these days, he was slowly falling away from Christianity.

I was worried, so I have been praying for him over the past 4 years. We have kept in touch and he has frequently visited me in Korea.

Over the past couple of months, I sent him sermons I've preached here at SEM and in Kenya.

Out of all my friends who I have sent my sermons to, Josh is actually the only one who replied asking for more. Send me all your sermons, he requested.

So I sent him many sermons and recently, he sent me this text message.

Thanks Joshua, your sermons really speak to me. I've been reading the gospel recently and have come to know Jesus more. I knew that I was a sinner but now I truly know how dirty I am. I pray that I may be able to spread the good news and not falter through time as well as what people may think of me.

Wow! That's the best news of all. I am in the same boat as you and I know you can tell God has been working in me too. I celebrate that you have come to know Jesus more and may He continue to work in you! I will continue to pray for you!

You see, the first thing that you must realize before you can truly come to Christ is know that you are a sinner – you need to truly know how dirty you are.

When you realize you are dirty, when you know you are a sinner, then you will want to become clean, you will want to be forgiven.

And that is why preachers need to preach the Bad News – the Law – first to reveal the hearers’ dirty, sinful state so that we yearn to be forgiven, we desire to be clean.

And once the preacher sets that context, he can then naturally transition into the Gospel as the answer to our sinfulness.

This is called Law-Gospel preaching.

Law-Gospel preaching makes the Good News, truly good news!

The Good News is Jesus came to forgive our sins – but the only way He can forgive us is if we – through the proper use of God’s Law -- first humble ourselves.

Realize how dirty we are, and how sinful we are – this is the bad news.

And the bad news prepare for and drives us to Christ, for His forgiveness (Gal. 3:24).

Once we are forgiven, like my friend Josh, we will desire not to falter and desire to spread the Good News to others.

In our Bible passage, a Pharisee named Simon invites Jesus to his house.

But a sinful woman goes to the Pharisee’s house and falls at the feet of Jesus. She starts crying uncontrollably. She is pierced to the heart because of her dirtiness, because of her sin.

Her tears fall on Jesus’ feet.

She has nothing to wipe her tears with, so she lets her hair down and she wipes Jesus’ feet and then she pours expensive perfume on them.

This must have been an awkward moment.

We've all been in awkward moments before, when everyone looks at you, when everyone is silent, and time just stands still.

Well, this was probably the most awkward of awkward moments.

I'm sure everyone in the house stood motionless staring at Jesus.

You could hear a pin drop.

The reason it was awkward was that this woman was a sinner, a prostitute – a bonafide adulterer -- and Jesus is known to be a righteous man.

Can you imagine a notorious prostitute comes to you and starts crying at your feet, wiping your feet with her hair? What would you do?

And this is what everyone is thinking: What is Jesus going to do?

And what about the host – Simon the Pharisee?

He probably said in disgust, "Why is Rabbi Jesus – this supposed man of God -- letting this dirty woman with her hair down touch his feet. Scandalous!

In Simon's "holy," judgmental pride, he probably thought, "If I were in Jesus's shoes – no pun intended -- I'd kick this dirty woman away!"

But here Jesus is, allowing her to touch and even kiss his feet.

And that is why Simon the Pharisee says, "If Jesus were truly a prophet, he would know who [this] woman is, for she is a sinner."

But Jesus knowing his hypocrisy, his incredible self-righteousness, and at the same time, Jesus knowing the woman's repentance, sorrow, and remorse for her sins, answers Simon,

“... Two people owed money to a moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them could pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Which of them will love him more?” Luke 7:41,42

Simon replies,

“... the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

Then [Jesus] said to Simon, “... I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ... this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, ... her many sins have been forgiven .... [W]hoever has been forgiven little, loves little.” Luke 7:45-47

You see, this woman realized how sinful she is and so she was forgiven much, naturally resulting in great love for her Savior.

Brothers and Sisters, **Do you want to love Jesus more?**

If so, **Realize how much of a sinner you are and how much He has forgiven you and, you will love him more.**

But what about Simon the Pharisee? You see, he was self-righteous.

He thought he was holy. And so he did not repent when Jesus came to visit him and as a result, he rejected the Savior – the Messiah!

Simon represents the unrepentant Jews who think they are special, chosen, righteous, holy. And because of their arrogance, they did not realize that they are actually dirty and sinful -- just like the prostitute.

The Jews failed to see their dirtiness and their need for the forgiveness of their sins. Thus, they rejected their Messiah!

Church, let us never, ever be arrogant and judge others as if they are dirtier than we are.

We are all filthy, dirty sinners in front of a holy, righteous God.

Then Jesus said to [the woman], “Your sins are forgiven.” vs. 48

This must have been the best news for the woman – your sins are forgiven.

Today, if you have repented of your sins, if you realize that you are dirty, if you are painfully sorry of all your sin and you come to Jesus for forgiveness, I declare as Jesus declared to the woman good news, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” vs. 50

Praise God that the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost!

Praise God that we have been saved through faith and now – because of what Christ has done for us -- we have peace with God!

Let us pray.

God, our heart breaks that the young generation is gradually leaving the church and no longer following you. We pray that there will be not a revival, but a repentance in the land. That many – just like the woman at Jesus’s feet -- would repent and believe in you. May the young generation in Korea and the US and in Canada and in the UK and in Kenya and all over the world repent and believe in you again. Father, our heart breaks because of our sin. May we come to Jesus’ feet once again and cry tears of sorrow and repentance for all our sins realizing that we are as dirty as an adulterer. May we come to saving faith in you and now love you with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind and love our neighbor as ourselves. Amen.

