

Nokesville UMC Sunday Drive-In Worship
July 12, 2020
Rev. YoungMin Kim

Living in the Spirit
Romans 8:9-11

(1)

I want to start today's sermon with a question: In spite of the weather with scorching heat, what made you to join our Drive-In Worship, taking time out of your peaceful and relaxed Sunday morning, driving from your home to church for 20, 30, or 40 minutes, and staying in your car with restrictions of mobility during worship? For those who join our Online Worship, what made you to give up your free time at your place and join our worship? What made you do so? Is it your religious obligation that you have to do so on Sunday morning? Is it to visit our church members through car windows? Or is it your desire to express your love and faith and to glorify God with your presence and dedication?

(2)

According to the Lectionary schedule, we read Romans 8:9-11. Since becoming Christians, we have been taught in the church or faith-based settings that we see the world with a dichotomy of views such as heaven vs. earth, spirit vs. body, faith vs. deed, and many others. And we consider that heaven, spirit, and faith are humble virtues that we Christians have to pursue, while earth, body, and deed are virtues that we Christians have to deny. We can find an example in Jesus's teaching in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Luke 16:13, *NIV*). Here is an obvious dichotomy, God vs. money. In today's passage, the Apostle Paul also emphasized a dichotomy between flesh and spirit and taught that living in the spirit is life and living in the flesh is death. How can we accept Jesus's and Paul's teachings in our lives of spirit? As stated, do we generalize the teachings into our lives today and have to pursue God and spirit and deny money and body?

Literally speaking, Jesus said this to the Pharisees in His time, who served God outwardly but loved money inwardly. Again, literally speaking, Paul said this to the Jewish believers in the Roman church, who did not claim to have the spirit because they believed that the spirit would be made available fully only at the time of the end. What if we love and serve God through loving and serving neighbors with our time, hands, and money? What if we seek the Holy Spirit every moment to lead us and guide us in our uncertain lives? Therefore, we can make a conclusion that neither Jesus nor Paul intended to teach a dichotomy between God and money or body and spirit. They found the two conflicting objects within the Pharisees and Jewish/Romans Christians. If so, are the two objects—like heaven and earth, spirit and body, faith and deeds, God and money, to name a few—in conflict with each other from the very beginning?

(3)

Let us think about the creation story, especially as described in Genesis 2. According to our faith, God “formed a man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being” (v. 7). What does this mean? We assume that God formed our body/flesh with the dust of the ground and gave the breath of life/the spirit to us. With the body and the spirit, we became living beings. Thus, our existence itself is made with the body and the spirit that cannot be separated. With this understanding, can we really say that the spirit is more important than the body? God also created the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth. Can we really say that the kingdom of heaven is more important than the kingdom of earth? If so, why did God make earth, send His only Son to earth, and let us live and be prosperous on earth? God also gave us faith to believe and deeds to practice our faith. Is faith more important than deeds? Is faith without deeds worthy? Therefore, division between heaven and earth, spirit and body, and faith and deeds are meaningless in our lives of faith.

Nevertheless, we need to think of our belief that “sin came into the world through one man” (Romans 5:12). Through the man, brokenness and separation came into the world. We became separated from God, our body from our spirit, kingdom of heaven from kingdom of earth, and our faith from our deeds. As a result, our body came to seek our physical desires; our deeds came to seek hatred, discrimination, injustice, and jealousy; and after all, the kingdom of earth became wounded and destroyed.

(4)

In this situation, what is the meaning of “living in the spirit?” The answer to this question is quite simple. Rather than standing on one side and despising the other side, it is to stand and be harmonious between both sides—between heaven and earth, spirit and body, and faith and deeds. It is to restore and unite what is separated into the original status.

However, we frequently misunderstand living in the spirit. If we try to read the Word of God, understand His will, and pray every single day, but cover our eyes and ears toward what is happening in our community, nation, and the world...well, I can say that it is not living in the spirit. On the contrary, if we jump into the world without any effort to read the Word, understand His will, and pray for others, again, I can say that it is not living in the spirit. Are your words and deeds full of God’s righteousness or your righteousness?

Living in the spirit is no longer about only pursuing heaven, the spirit, and faith. Living in the spirit is to practice Jesus’s teachings of love on earth so that God restores the broken world into the kingdom of God on earth. Living in the spirit is to abate our physical desires and to enhance God’s will within us. And living in the spirit is to perform God’s will and righteousness in the broken world through our deeds.

Drive-in worshipers and Online worshipers,
you gather here in the name of God, accepting inconvenience and giving up your freedom and relaxation on Sunday morning. It is one of the evidences that you are living in the spirit. I pray that you live in the spirit throughout your lives. Amen.