

Nokesville UMC Sunday Worship [Lent II]  
February 28, 2021  
Rev. YoungMin Kim

God Waits Until We Change  
Psalm 22:22-31

(1)

During the past couple of weeks, I have visited some of our senior members who stayed at home after returning from the hospital or rehab. When I talked with them, I was worried about their recovery and their feelings like frustration, depression, and others. But they had another worry. That was disconnection with their friends and our church members.

I talked to our SPPRC chair about me visiting Korea in April for my father's health issue. South Korea has very strict guidelines for those who enter from overseas countries. First, I should submit the negative results of the PCR test done within 72 hours before I board an airplane. And then, I should have 14 days of self-quarantine in a separate space. It is allowed neither to stay with my family nor to go outside even though there are no people. If I violate the regulations, a warning will be given, and a heavy fine might be charged. I will be physically disconnected from society for two weeks. I am somewhat excited but also anxious about being involuntarily isolated from people and society. As our God is communal—God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit—and created us as communal beings—living and interacting with others—worry or anxiety coming from isolation is a natural reaction.

Today, we will meet a man in Scripture. In his desperate situation, he became isolated and disconnected with his people and society. But it seemed he had no regard for it. Instead, he seemed to worry about disconnection from God. Let us see how he reacted when he felt disconnected from God and how he recovered.

(2)

According to the Lectionary schedule, we read Psalm 22:22-31, spending the second Sunday in Lent. Psalm 22 was written by David. This is a poem of his anguish coming from threats to his life by King Saul. Saul knew that God abandoned him and anointed David through the Prophet Samuel as the second king of Israel. He became furious and tried to kill David whenever he had the chance. For the one anointed as a king, rather than having a prepared and paved road of life, frequent threats to his life were waiting for him. And Psalm 22 was written under these circumstances.

It can be divided into two parts: one is verses 1 through 21, and the other verse 22 through 31, which is today's passage. In order to understand today's passage, we also need to know about the first part as well as the connection between the first and the second parts.

The first part (vv. 1-21) is filled with appeals and prayers of David in the midst of his suffering, threats to his life, and desperation. See verse one. David said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" You have heard this desperate cry, right? Jesus quoted David's words in Aramaic on the cross with His last breath: "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" David continued, "Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest" (vv. 1b-2). "All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me; they shake their heads; 'Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—let him rescue the one in whom he delights!' (vv. 7-8). As we keep reading the first part, we come to be confused whether these are the cries of David or the cries of Jesus Christ. That is why Psalm 22 is also called "The Prophecy of the Biggest Sorrow," "The Psalm of the Messiah," and "The Psalm of the Cross."

For David (and for Jesus), the actual anguish was not physical pain or fear; it was disconnection from God. He kept crying out to and seeking God, but God never answered him. People who praised David now became sarcastic and mocked him; but God kept silent. David felt God forsook him. His anguish and crying out continue until verse 21.

(3)

Starting in verse 22, however, the tone of Psalm 22 dramatically changes. Rather than crying out in anguish and despair, David began to praise the LORD. There was no turning point described in the passage, but his attitude surely changed. And the second part—today’s passage—is filled with praise and thanksgiving after salvation. Verse 22 says, “...in the midst of the congregation, I will praise you [Lord]”; verse 24, “For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him”; and verse 26, “the poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the Lord...” David’s praise and thanksgiving continue until the end of the chapter.

We can assume that the first part of Psalm 22 was written when David was in the midst of suffering and threats to his life by King Saul. The second part was likely written when David escaped and finally became free from the suffering and threats. If so, there is nothing special about David because anyone can cry out under suffering, despair, calamity, threats, and others and give thanks after they are all gone.

But the reason that this psalm of David is placed among the 150 psalms is to show his faithfulness to God in the midst of suffering and threats to his life. It was in the same timeframe. David escaped from King Saul and his death threats and hid himself somewhere safe temporarily, but he was unsure when and where Saul’s attack and threats would come to him again. Flashing back over his desperate situation, he gushed out his fear, anger, anguish, complaints, resentment, and many others to God. But they did not last long. After gushing them out, David finally came back to his natural self and reminded himself of what God had done for him. And he believed that God would lead him to the righteous way. Thus, even though he was still in the life-threatening situation, he began to praise and give thanks to God for his salvation, which he believed would come soon.

(4)

From time to time, we experience God’s silence in response to our prayers and pleading in the midst of our suffering. It would be better if God would give us a signal of “Yes” or “No,” but sometimes He keeps silent. Just as the opposite of love is indifference, so God seems to be indifferent from us and to neglect or abandon us. Not by any means! We are the ones whom God saved by paying for with the death of His only begotten Son.

In the midst of His silence, God still listens to the sounds from our mouth and from our hearts, and He waits until the sounds become in accordance with His will. God waited for David until his sounds of sighing and resentment turned to praise and thanksgiving. That was what God expected from David in his desperate situation. And when David did so—when it became in accordance with God’s will—God raised him up and recovered him.

Are you crying out to God in the midst of the pandemic or in the midst of your personal hardship and difficulties? But do you feel that God has closed His eyes and covered His ears and mouth? Do you feel that God neglects and abandons you? Not by any means! God still listens to our crying out in His silence. God just waits for us until our crying out turns to thanksgiving and praise. Even though we are in Christ, in the light of God’s grace and love, our life has never been changed because we praise and give thanks to God when good things happen to us; and we gush out our grumbles and dissatisfaction when unexpected situations happen to us. If we keep praising and giving thanks to God in the mist of our suffering and hardship, we will come to meet God in the midst of them and to see His helping hands. Amen.