

■ The 122nd Sharing of the Word

- First Reading: Isaiah 8:23-9:3 (The difference in the numbering of Isaiah 8:23 is due to variations in chapter and verse divisions among translations.)

In the 8th century BC (around 735 BC), the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) formed an alliance with Aram (Syria) and invaded the Southern Kingdom of Judah, ruled by King Ahaz (Isaiah chapter 7). King Ahaz, a man lacking faith, sought assistance from Assyria. As foretold in the prophecy (Isaiah 7:16), Assyria achieved victory.

The land of the defeated Ephraim Zebulun and Naphtali was conquered and assimilated, becoming spiritually despised and covered in darkness. Yet into this land of darkness, God proclaimed salvation, declaring that the people would “see a great light.” Thus, the land of suffering became the very first place to receive God’s salvation—the starting point of redemption.

Jesus chose Galilee (the northern region of Ephraim), a land looked down upon by the Jews and inhabited by a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles, as the starting point of his ministry. From this place, God’s salvation spread outward. The age of darkness would not continue; the land that was first humiliated would be the first to behold God’s glory, and “the darkness would be dispelled.”

War, oppression, spiritual ignorance, and separation from God represent “darkness,” while God’s intervention, salvation, hope, and life represent “light.” As it is written, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,” and indeed, Jesus’ public ministry began in Galilee (Matthew 4:12-16).

Salvation does not remain merely as comfort. The people return to their land, rebuild the temple and their community, and experience “joy and gladness.” The joy of “harvest” and of “dividing the spoils” expresses the restored sense of security and confidence in life itself.

When Israel was invaded by the Midianites, God brought salvation and deliverance through Gideon using only three hundred men armed with torches and trumpets (Judges chapters 7-8) and “broke the yoke” of oppression. This historical reality is echoed here as well. This passage proclaims the “dawn of hope,” foretelling the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

[Author’s Note] Salvation began from a place that had been abandoned.

- First Reading: Isaiah 8:23-9:3 (The difference in the numbering of Isaiah 8:23 is due to variations in chapter and verse divisions among translations.)

In the 8th century BCE (around 735 BCE), the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) and Aram (Syria) formed an alliance and invaded the Southern Kingdom of Judah under King Ahaz (cf. Isaiah 7). King Ahaz, lacking faith, sought military assistance from the Assyrian Empire; nevertheless, according to God’s prophecy (Isaiah 7:16), victory was granted. The land of the defeated Ephraim namely Zebulun and Naphtali was conquered and assimilated, and it came to be despised spiritually as well, becoming a land covered in darkness. Yet God proclaims salvation, declaring that He will shine a “light” into this land of darkness. The land of suffering thus becomes the “starting point of salvation,” the first to receive God’s deliverance.

Galilee (the northern region of Ephraim) was an area mixed with Gentiles and was regarded by Jews as religiously inferior. Nevertheless, Jesus chose this land as the place where He would begin His public ministry, and from there God’s salvation spread outward. An age of darkness does not last forever: the land that was first humiliated becomes the first to behold God’s glory, and “the darkness is dispelled.”

War, domination, spiritual ignorance, and separation from God are described as “darkness,” while God’s intervention, salvation, hope, and life are “light.” The words, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,” are thus connected with the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee (Matthew 4:12-16) and are understood as a Messianic prophecy.

Salvation does not remain merely a source of consolation. The people return to their land, and through the rebuilding

of the Temple and the community, salvation brings “joy and gladness.” The joy of the “harvest” and of “dividing the spoils” expresses the restoration of security and confidence in life itself. When Israel was invaded by the Midianites, God brought salvation and liberation through Gideon (with only 300 men, armed with torches and trumpets; Judges 7-8), breaking the “yoke” that bound the people. This passage likewise proclaims a “dawn of hope” that foretells the coming of the Messiah (Jesus).

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

During Paul’s second missionary journey, he founded the church in Corinth. Corinth was an international city marked by strong competition. After Paul left the city, divisions arose within the church, and Paul addressed this problem. The cause of the divisions lay in factionalism based on attachment to human “names” and “wisdom”—the groups claiming allegiance to Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or Christ. At its core, this conflict distorted the Gospel by boasting in human leaders.

The Gospel is the good news that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, forgiveness of sins and eternal life have been given to humanity, and reconciliation between God and humankind has been accomplished. This Gospel is the power that brings about salvation. Those who are united with Jesus through baptism are exhorted not to be divided, but to walk together with one heart and one mind. This is the appeal made “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”: to turn away from a faith that boasts in oneself and to return to a faith that boasts only in the cross.

“To be of one heart and mind” means:

to stand on the same foundation rather than on personal evaluations, and

to follow Jesus, honoring one another without passing judgment.

This does not mean forcing uniformity of opinion, but rather being united with the cross at the center.

Members of Chloe’s household (living either in Corinth or Ephesus) reported to Paul the disputes within the church. When Paul asks, “Has Christ been divided?” he emphasizes that salvation does not come from human beings, but solely from Jesus on the cross. Even if speakers are praised for their human wisdom or eloquence, if repentance and transformation do not occur, then “the cross of Christ is emptied of its power.” Paul insists that what matters is proclaiming the cross as it truly is, not relying on “the wisdom of words,” for salvation is the power of God.

● Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:12-23

This passage marks a turning point at which Jesus’ public ministry begins in earnest after His baptism. John the Baptist has been imprisoned by Herod, and Jesus withdraws to Galilee, waiting for the fulfillment of God’s appointed time. As it is written, “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali... Galilee will receive glory” (Isaiah 9:1).

Galilee is described as “the land of the Gentiles,” indicating that the scope of salvation is not limited. It was looked down upon as a peripheral region in contrast to Jerusalem and was regarded as distant from God’s presence a place of “darkness” and “the shadow of death.” Yet it is from this despised place that God’s salvation begins.

Using the same words as John the Baptist, Jesus proclaims, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” In doing so, He carries forward John’s mission and stands at the fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah. Peter and Andrew, who had already been longing for the Messiah through the ministry of John the Baptist, sense both “authority” and “invitation” in Jesus’ words and respond to His call. This response signifies an immediate break from their former way of life their values and beliefs and a prompt obedience to God’s call.

James and John likewise leave their nets, the very means of their livelihood, demonstrating that following the Lord takes precedence even over family ties. The many miracles Jesus performs are signs that the kingdom of God has arrived. By making God’s mercy visible to people, they reveal “what kind of God He is.”