

■ The 124th Sharing of the Word 〈Explanation and Meditation〉

● First Reading: Isaiah 58:7-10

After the return from the Babylonian Exile, worship and fasting were resumed, yet injustice and poverty remained. The people lamented, “Why do we fast, but you do not see?” (Isaiah 58:3), and the Lord warned them not to fall into merely formal faith (Isaiah 58:3?6).

True restoration begins with sacrificial sharing in daily life: “sharing your bread with the hungry,” welcoming the poor into one’s home until they are restored (cf. Luke 14:13?14), and not neglecting acts of charity. For survival, it is not enough to speak words alone; one must “clothe the naked” (cf. James 2:15-16), refuse to look away, and “not withhold help from one’s kindred,” following the example of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10).

Through such human actions, God’s light is revealed: “your light shall break forth like the dawn” (cf. Matthew 5:16). As communities and persons broken by exile are restored, “your wounds shall be healed,” and by living in a way pleasing to God self-forgetful devotion to the Lord (忘己喜主) “your vindicator shall go before you,” while God protects your rear guard, that is, your weakness and past.

Prayer reaches God, and God delights in it. When you call, the Lord answers, saying, “Here I am.” If unjust demands and oppression that place a “yoke” on others are removed; if blaming, pointing fingers, and hurtful, curse-like words that destroy community are taken away; if you show consideration for others, attend to the needs of the afflicted, and satisfy their longing then “your light shall rise in the darkness,” and “your gloom shall be like the noonday.”

God’s grace is received through a way of life pleasing to God, for “faith is completed by works” (James 2:22).

● Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

The purpose of Paul’s letters is to correct the “human values” within the church and to restore the foundation of faith to the “power of God.” God’s power works where human effort fails. It is:

the power that gives life and salvation (supporting the weak, restoring them, and renewing the heart),
the power that raises people up and grants life (leading from despair to hope and breaking bonds), and
the practical power that leads people into love.

Paul’s visit to Corinth, when he “came to you” to establish the church (Acts 18), marks the starting point of their faith. The good news that through Jesus’ death on the cross and his resurrection eternal life is given, and that life in the new Kingdom of God has begun, is the Gospel. Hearing this opens the heart, and the process by which one is transformed into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) is salvation this is God’s hidden plan (Ephesians 1:9).

Walking in the grace of salvation cannot be achieved by human effort alone (Ephesians 2:8), but by walking in the power of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16), which leads us along a path pleasing to the Lord.

Paul rejected “human words or wisdom” in proclaiming this message because he was determined to center everything on “Jesus Christ crucified,” resolving “to know nothing else.” Paul’s “weakness” refers to:

physical and mental frailty,
fear arising from persecution and opposition in the city, and
anxiety that compelled him to rely entirely on God’s power.

It is precisely in such weakness that “the power of God” is at work (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul’s proclamation of the Gospel did not rely on eloquent speech or human techniques of wisdom, but through the work of the Holy Spirit was given “spirit and power.” By not depending on persuasive human wisdom, God’s power is revealed, and by trusting this power all the more, the foundation of faith remains unshaken.

Author’s Note: I came to understand the Gospel and salvation more clearly.

● Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:13-16

After Jesus speaks of the Beatitudes (the inner life) on the mountain, he teaches about a way of life expressed outwardly as salt and light. Salt preserves from corruption, enhances flavor by drawing out goodness, and signifies purification and covenant (Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19). Thus, an indispensable presence is called “the salt of the earth.”

In those days, salt contained impurities, and when its saltiness was lost, it lost its essential function. In the same way, when faith our relationship with God is cut off, it becomes “good for nothing.”

The moon shines by reflecting the light of the sun; likewise, people shine by receiving God’s light?this is “the light of the world.” A city set on a hill is visible even at night. Those who live by God’s values cannot remain hidden, not because they seek attention, but because they naturally stand out. The lamp given by God his grace of faith, life, and mission must not be placed “under a bushel basket.” Fear and comparison with others also extinguish God’s light.

A lamp fulfills its purpose when placed on a lampstand, and likewise, people are called to flourish where they have been placed. Light shines without discrimination, illuminating all. While remaining in communion with God, we are called to “let your light shine,” so that through your “good works” grounded in the Beatitudes, others “may glorify your Father.” The Lord is always the One “who sees” (cf. Matthew 6:31), and Jesus does not say “become” salt or light, but affirms that we have “already been made” so. Therefore, we are drawn ever closer to Jesus.

Author’s Note: The Word of God feels like an inexhaustible spring.

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