

Text: Genesis 18:16-19

Title: A Kingdom built on the foundation of righteousness and justice

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1.

Today is the Transfiguration of Jesus on the Mountain by a church calendar, which is celebrated just before Lent. The Transfiguration on the Mountain refers to the transfiguration of Jesus when he went to the mountain to pray with Peter, James, and John before he suffered. When Jesus prayed, the appearance of his face transformed, and his clothes shone dazzlingly white (Luke 9:29). Peter and the two disciples dozed off without praying and woke up to see an amazing scene. Jesus' face changed and his clothes were exceptionally shining. They also found Jesus talking with two famous Old Testament figures. Those two were Moses and Elijah. After talking with them, Jesus heard his Father's voice from heaven. The reason why the Transfiguration on the Mountain Sunday is right before Lent in the church calendar is because Jesus began to say that He would suffer from the Transfiguration on the Mountain.

Why did Moses and Elijah appear before Jesus? Moses and Elijah represent the Pentateuch and the Prophets, which were understood as the Old Testament at the time. These are the two people who represent the Torah, the Pentateuch of Moses, and the Neviim, the prophetic book, which I mentioned last week. In other words, the promise of God echoed in the Bible by people like Moses and Elijah is Jesus. It means that the Exodus led by Moses and the reenactment of the Exodus event that the prophets worked hard for will now be accomplished through Jesus. So now, before the Passion of Jesus began in earnest, a voice was heard from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, the same voice had already been heard from heaven. Now, right before Jesus begins the event of salvation prophesied by Moses and the prophets in Jerusalem, God is expressing his sincere thanks to Jesus.

In that sense, Luke 9:31 is very important. Verse 31 is the subject of a conversation Jesus had with Moses and Elijah. "(Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.) They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." In the Revised Bible, 'departure' is translated as 'death', and in the English Bible, it is translated as 'departure' or 'decease'. By the way, the Greek Bible says, "The Exodus of Jesus was spoken of in glory." The work Jesus had to complete in Jerusalem was Exodus. Whose sacrifice was it that made the Exodus possible in the days of Moses? At the time of the Exodus, the blood of the lamb was applied to the doorposts, and the curse passed over, so the Israelites escaped the curse. And they were led from Egypt and were reborn as a new covenant people. What Jesus will complete in Jerusalem is the sacrifice of the cross, which will be a sacrifice to lead his covenant people to the new land of promise. So, in John 1:29, John saw Jesus and confessed like this. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus is saying that through the sacrifice of the cross, he will lead the children of light to serve as priests for all peoples of the world. Jesus died in Jerusalem in order to bring many people out of Egypt. Moses and Elijah, the representative figures of the Old Testament, appear and prove this amazing truth.

2.

Jesus did not appear in this world out of the blue. In many stories of the Old Testament, God has been working on the history of salvation. And God's will to save, which has been repeatedly revealed, will finally be completed through Jesus Christ.

You can't understand the cross of Jesus with cutting out the story of God's salvation that keeps echoing in the Old Testament. When Abraham shouted at the great mountain peak, the same voice echoed from Moses far away (Echoing). The voice of Moses echoed through Israel and echoed through John the Baptist. And Jesus puts all those echoes together to make His voice. Simply put, it is impossible to understand the salvation and gospel of Jesus Christ more deeply without understanding the will and stories of God's salvation that have been accumulated in the Old Testament. That's why you have to read the Old Testament. It is because the depth of understanding of the salvation of Jesus and the gospel is different. For example, if you read the novel "Les Misérables" in total of five volumes, starting with the fourth volume, you might mistakenly think that Jean Valjean was originally such a kind person, right? We must not miss the story of how Bishop Myriel embraced Jean Valjean, who stole the silver candlesticks and silver plates, with infinite forgiveness and love. Only when we read how Jean Valjean was dramatically converted by the power of love in volume 1 can we understand the meaning of his good deeds in the rest of the book.

3.

Let's take a look at today's text to find out what the echo of salvation resounded to Abraham. The text occupies a very important part of the story of Abraham. This is because the blueprint for the kingdom of God that God would create will be repeated and echoed in the Old Testament in the future. So, the reality and essence of the kingdom of God, which will be created through Abraham and his descendants, is being presented. This is important because this message will echo in the same way in Jesus. The main text begins with the visit of some three people. These three people were actually angels sent by God. They received God's command and came to investigate the reality of the cry being heard in the city of Sodom. Abraham and Sarah treat them with great hospitality. Well received, they bless Sarah that she will give birth to a baby boy this time next year. After receiving the promise and nothing happened for 24 years, Sarah laughed at the words. They had already tried to give birth to a male child from their servant to succeed the generation, but God repeatedly confirmed that descendants would come from Sarah's womb. They had been confirmed by God many times, but it seemed to them that time had more impact than God. Anyway, after hearing the good news of Sarah's pregnancy, Abraham sees the three of them off. On the way to see them off, God's voice was delivered to Abraham through them, and that is today's text.

" Verse 18 seems like a repetition of Genesis 12:1-3. The point is that the reason Abraham and his descendants were chosen was to bless all nations. However, this promise is a blessing premised on Abraham's obedience. What was the content of obedience given to Abraham? "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

To put it simply, God gives certain commands to Abraham and his descendants. The command is expressed as 'the way of the Lord'. The Hebrew word 'derek' means the way. Of the two paths of life that I preached last week, it must mean the path of the righteous. The path that Abraham and his descendants must keep is compressed into two words. It was translated as righteousness and justice in the Revised Version of the Bible. In the New Translation, it translates as 'right and just thing', 'right and justice' in NIV, and 'justice and judgment' in KJV.

These two words are 'Tsudaka (צְדָקָה)' and 'Mishpat (מִשְׁפָּט)' in Hebrew. Tsudaka, translated as righteousness, is a word that refers to 'restorative justice' and implies charity or relief. In any

society, some become rich and others poor through the process of distributing the surplus of people's common lives. The Bible teaches that it is the obligation of the rich to care for those less fortunate so that they can enjoy a decent life. That is the right life.

Mishpat, translated as justice, is juridical justice. I think it would be better to translate it as righteousness. It refers to the fairness of judges in accordance with the law. Justice does not take sides with the powerful, and it does not condone lawlessness because of the poor. Just because a large number of people are involved doesn't mean they're not guilty. There is no punishment for making a crime that is not there. When judicial justice is right, people trust public authority. That is, it assumes that a person's status or wealth cannot affect the judgment.

Tsudaka and Mishpat are concepts that begin with the respect for human beings, who are made in the image of God. Tsudaka and Mishpat are autonomous civic values in which everyone is equal in the community and everyone equally shares and owns wealth. These are the two great pillars of the kingdom of God.

Psalms 97:1-2 echoes these words. "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne." It describes a country ruled by God. However, there are two big pillars on the throne of the kingdom of God, and they are righteousness and justice. 'Tsudaka' and 'Mishpat' in Genesis 18:19 are used as a pair, but the Korean Bible translates them differently as 'justice and fairness'.

What's important? The kingdom of God, that is, the core of God's reign contains these two essences. The country that will be experimented and practiced in the future through Abraham and his descendants is the country where 'Tsudaka' and 'Mishpat' are realized. Abraham must create a country where righteousness and justice are realized. However, the essence of the city culture pursued by his nephew Lot was a country that went in the opposite direction. It seems safe to stay in the castle, but in reality it is like a society of beasts that bite their neighbors. So these angels are telling Abraham to contrast his country with Sodom. "What can I hide from you? Your country can't become like that Sodom, you know?" This is the nuance. Abraham was given the task of creating an alternative country that contrasted with Sodom.

4.

Sodom was destroyed because there were no 10 righteous people who practiced Mishpat and Tsudaka. In chapter 19, the next chapter of the main text, two messengers sent by God entered Lot's house, and the men of the city tried to invade Lot's house. It was to rape two male guests. It tells how dire the moral situation of the city was. Why do people commit sins to the detriment of others? Because they think the other person has nothing to do with themselves. It's because they don't look at the other person in the image of God. It is because they treat people as objects for their own desires. Because they don't respect or acknowledge it as a person, they use the other person for my needs. The Old Testament says that these are sins and unrighteousness. Tsudaka and Mishpat are missing.

This is what I experience while living in China. The Chinese tend not to get involved when someone is being beaten on the street. It's because he's a person who has nothing to do with me, and I can only get into trouble if I get involved. It may be a different story, but there are still many doorless toilets in China. One of the rationale for this is that there are so many people that you are unlikely to see the person you bumped into in the bathroom again. We don't care about others if we think of them as people who have nothing to do with us. They even do it recklessly.

On the contrary, if you think that your neighbor is a person who receives God's utmost attention and is a person made in God's image, you can show greater interest and love to him.

Why did Jesus reach out to those who were poor, sick, and treated as sinners? Because Jesus acknowledged them as person. He came to restore the image of God in people who have been distorted by their rough treatment. Tsudaka and Mishpat are based on the premise of respect for my neighbors who are created in the image of God. Our attitude changes when we open our eyes that everyone around us is connected to us and has meaning to us. If you think of the other person as your neighbor or your brother or sister, you will respect and value them.

Earthquakes in Turkey and Syria on the other side of the world don't seem to have anything to do with us, but we want to help them. Because we see them as our brothers and sisters and as our neighbors. It is not a waste to open our wallets to help them live a minimum human life by being created in the image of God.

5.

The country that God dreamed of through Abraham was a kingdom with right and justice. Righteousness and justice, God's way of ruling, are rooted in love. In Romans 13:10, it says "Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." When we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and choose to live according to His teachings, Jesus gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then the law of the Spirit of life sets them free from the law of sin and death. Now, the Holy Spirit takes the initiative in their lives and rules them. However, the law of the Holy Spirit is the law that moves and governs according to love. When there are many people who are fully ruled by the Holy Spirit, there is no need for a centralized state. This is because righteousness and justice can be fully exercised so that self-government can be achieved to the extent that the state is not needed.

Republic refers to a country governed by ordinary citizens, not professional soldiers. However, the kingdom of God is governed by the people by the Holy Spirit. People who have been moved by the Holy Spirit are all autonomous and move by love, so it becomes a beautiful world. The church is the place where you can taste the reign of the people by the Holy Spirit. The church is said to be a foretaste of heaven. The church is a community where people who believe in Jesus and come under the rule of the Holy Spirit autonomously share love. Even though no one collects taxes, they come dressed in nice clothes and pay their taxes voluntarily. And with that finance, we want to help the underprivileged and marginalized around us. If every church took responsibility for the welfare of its neighborhood or community, the state would become unnecessary. What we dream of is a world where more people are ruled by the Holy Spirit. It is because when there are many autonomous people who are ruled by the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God can be established more powerfully on this earth.

6.

Shall we summarize the message? Before Jesus suffers, he confirms the path he is walking through Moses and Elijah. Jesus came to this earth to practice God's will of salvation, which was to be realized in the long history and narrative of the Old Testament. And the sacrifice of Jesus will make a new exodus to bless the covenant people to all peoples. The Exodus will be opened by the sacrifice of the lamb, and Jesus himself will become the Lamb of God and open the true way and life to many people. The way Jesus would go was also the way already presented through many stories in the Old Testament. It has been echoed by the Israelites over and over again since the time of Abraham. The country that God will create through the people of Israel is

a country based on righteousness and justice. It is a nation of love that will be autonomously governed by God's covenant people.

The kingdom of God is not that far off in Andromeda. God wants to create a new heaven and a new earth on this earth. God wants the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Tsudaka and Mishpat are the most necessary foundations to build that country. The kingdom of God is built upon these two pillars. This kind of justice and fairness is naturally given to those who obey the whole reign of the Holy Spirit. It is because those who are ruled by the Holy Spirit open their eyes to see their neighbors as noble beings created in the image of God. They are people who care for their neighbors because they understand so deeply that a life that does not harm them and loves them is what God wants them to be. Such a person feels sad to see that judicial justice is not practiced on this land. We live in a world where judicial justice is still broken and there are still many people who do not want a fair distribution of wealth. In the midst of such a world, we must create a nation that God desires. When the knowledge of the Lord fills the earth as the waters cover the sea, there will be no harm or damage (Isaiah 11:9). We hope that such a beautiful world will be created through us. It is not a world like Sodom without humanity, but I hope to taste the kingdom of God built on righteousness and justice in which we love each other and take responsibility for each other in advance on this world.