

Text : John 3:13-21

Title : The Love that Sending and giving up / translation : Chungil Wi

1.

Mr. Chung Ju-young, CEO of Hyundai ran for the 14th presidential election in 1992. As a result of the election, Mr. Kim Young-sam of the Democratic Liberal Party was elected as President. At the time, CEO Chung Ju-young was 87 years old, and he was criticized for having urinary incontinence while running for president. CEO Chung then reportedly told his aides that he would be willing to spend 40 trillion won if it meant making him 40 years younger. If an 87-year-old spends 40 trillion won to turn 47, I am currently 47 years old and have an asset value of 40 trillion won. A woman is in her late 20s, so she must have a net worth of over 70 trillion won. It means that there is nothing more precious and valuable than life. Enjoying this precious life not only in this world but also in the world to come is called eternal life. Therefore, the value of eternal life cannot be changed by anything. The Bible tells us how to enjoy this precious life forever. And according to the Bible, the way to enjoy eternal life seems very easy. You just have to believe and rely on it. But for many people in the world, this method does not seem easy. Because it is unreliable and not easy to trust. At the time of Jesus, there were many people who did not believe even after seeing his miracles and signs. There were so many people who did not believe even after seeing, but now that we are told to believe without seeing, there are likely to be many who do not believe. The way to eternal life is to just believe, so it seems very easy, but the method of faith is unfamiliar to people. How easy would it be if we were told to buy, to eat, or to have something that will give you eternal life? But the Bible tells us not to do that, but to believe in Jesus and look to Him. Rational and normal people think, 'No, what changes if you look and believe?' In their eyes, Christians seem like crazy people and not rational people.

In today's text, John 3:16 is a word that everyone who has attended church for a while memorizes. I also learned this verse as a song at Sunday school when I was six years old. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" Christians believe that the profound secret of salvation is hidden in these short words. It is said that God loved the world like this, but this verse becomes a little complicated because of the word 'like this.' The fact that God loved the world this way raises the question, how did he love it? To explain that God loved the world this much, John quotes Numbers 21:4-9 from the Old Testament. In this way, we can see that it is "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." So what does it mean that God loved us like Moses lifted a snake in the wilderness?

2.

First, you need to know the contents of Numbers Chapter 21, right? The Israelites complain to Moses and God in the wilderness. The question was, why did they make us, who were living well in Egypt, escape here and suffer? They are complaining about how difficult it is to live in the wilderness, where they cannot eat as much as they want and there is not enough water to drink. The reason this is serious is because it nullifies and fundamentally denies God's salvation. The Exodus was an event of salvation in which God sent Moses to escape the Israelites from Egypt due to their lamentations and cries. However, they are denying this event of salvation in the wilderness. They say they will go back to Egypt, but they are saying that they do not need God for them. Their attitude toward God is very rude and disrespectful. It was an act of losing faith. The disbelief that was

practiced in Adam was practiced again. God sends fiery serpents to judge their unbelief. As people bitten by snakes fell and died, the people came to Moses and begged him to save them. So what method did God use to save the people? He kills a fiery serpent and hangs the bronze serpent in its image on a pole. And it is said that those who look at the bronze serpent will not die. Even if a person had already been bitten by a fiery snake and the poison was spreading to his heart, he could survive by simply looking at the bronze snake hanging on a pole. He wants to provide salvation by killing the fiery serpent that causes death and creating a bronze serpent. So, it is a way to kill death and save the people. Salvation is not provided through biochemical reactions or medical methods, but through faith. This is an important point. The incident that promised salvation through faith was the fiery serpent incident in the wilderness.

I know that I am running toward death, but I believe that God has overcome death through death, and I believe in the method of salvation that God presents. This is the way of salvation, where the Son of Man is lifted up just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness. In other words, there are two points in saying that God will save us as if he were holding a snake. The first way is to overcome death by killing it. Second, salvation is achieved through faith. Just as the snake was lifted up on a pole, the Son of Man will be lifted up on the cross, symbolizing the death of Jesus. Through the death of Jesus, He will solve the problem of death that prevents us from reaching eternal life. He will give eternal life to everyone who sees Jesus lifted up on the cross and believes in him. The Gospel of John strongly asserts that Christian salvation is obtained through this type of faith. This is the meaning contained in the statement that God so loved the world.

The Gospel of John introduces Jesus as the one who came down from above. And it is said that he will be lifted up. The one who came from above is called the Son of Man in the text. Son of Man means Son of Man. Son means heir. Jesus, the heir of God, is 'the Son of the Man' sent from heaven. Verse 14 says that because Jesus, the Son of Man, came from above, he can be lifted up, just as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness. This means that Jesus will be lifted up from the cross. The cross is the passage through which the Son Jesus is lifted up to God in heaven. He is lifted up to return to his Father, and that is the cross. In the Gospel of John, the cross is understood not as suffering, but as a place where Jesus is exalted as the Son of God and receives glory.

Those who look to Jesus who was lifted up on the cross and believe in Him receive eternal life as a gift and are saved. This is the way God saves us, similar to the salvation that came to the man who looked at the bronze serpent. Anyone who looks down is doomed to death. What does that mean? This means that there is no possibility of salvation in the world below. This means that there is salvation only when we lift our eyes and look at God above. Salvation comes only from God. All who try to seek salvation in their own way will die. Even Nicodemus, at the pinnacle of Judaism, is no exception. Observance of Jewish law, knowledge through Platonic philosophy, Taoist compliance with nature, and modern science and technology cannot solve human problems, nor can humans save themselves. Salvation comes only from above. Our salvation is possible only through the Son of God from above being lifted up on the cross. Salvation is possible simply by looking at the cross that Jesus brought, forgiveness of sins, and union with God. This is the gospel.

3.

God clearly states that the reason he sent his Son into this world was not to judge this world, but to save the world. So, because God loves this world, He sent His Son to save this world. In other words, by looking at Jesus whom God sent, we can know how much God loves us. Jesus was sent to reveal to the world what God is like. Jesus was clearly conscious that he was sent. Jesus, the Son of God, was sent to show the world how much God loves it. Jesus' death on the cross is an event that reveals

God's love. The cross is an event that reveals that God's essence is love. By revealing the essence of God on the cross, Jesus showed that He is the One who possesses the essence of God. This means that Jesus revealed through the cross that the essence of God is love.

The fact that God loved the world this way contains two formulas of love. The first is the sending formula and the second is the giving up formula. This means that God's love was revealed through sending and giving up his Son. Jesus was self-conscious that he was sent on a mission by his Father. Why does it show His love for God to send His Son from above to below? God sent his Son as his agent and gave him all of God's authority. Jesus came to this earth as someone who was delegated authority from God and carried out God's will. God sent his Son from above to below to build a bridge between the world above and the world below. So, the possibility of salvation in the world above has now opened up to us who live in the world below. Also, God gave this Son for our salvation. This giving is an extreme expression of God's love. God loved this world so much that He gave His own Son. Jesus' death on the cross shows how much God loves us. The love that He loved us enough to kill His Son on the cross was proven through His giving. So, through giving up His sent ones, God revealed to the world that His essence is love. Verse 17 clearly states that God sent His Son into the world to save the world through Him. It is now up to us whether we believe in the Son or not. Those who still believe there is a possibility of salvation in the world below cannot defeat death. It's like a person dying from a snakebite. However, there is no possibility of salvation in the world below, and those who believe in Jesus sent from above and in the saving power of his cross will be saved by God.

4.

We must keep in mind these two formulas that God used to show his love for the world. Sent and given away, this is the most important identity of Christians and the church as a gathering of Christians. This is because the essence of God that Christians believe in and follow is love, and the way that love is expressed is through sending and giving. Jesus was sent from heaven and showed God's love by being obedient to the point of death on the cross. After hanging on the cross, Jesus was resurrected after death, ascended to heaven, and sits at the right hand of God's throne. Now God has sent the Holy Spirit to this earth and awakened the church. The church is a being sent to this earth as the body of Christ to replace Christ. The way of existence of the church, the body of Christ, is sending and giving, or in other words, self-giving.

The church is a community sent into the world. In Latin, sending is expressed with the word *missio*. In English it is mission. The reason and purpose of the church's existence is to be sent. We often call this a missional church and confirm the purpose of the church's existence. Why did God send the church into the world? The reason he sent the church into the world is the same as the reason he sent Jesus to this earth. He was sent to reveal the essence of God to the world. The essence of God is love. So, God sent the church into this world to reveal to the whole world that God is love. All of you are sent. In other words, it means missionary being. Missionary Beings must live the way of life in order to reveal the essence of the One who has been sent. What did God who sent us say about his way of existence? His self-giving, that is, the way of life in which he gives himself up for others, is the way of God we believe in. He is a God who loved us so much that He gave His only begotten Son for the world. The three persons of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, exist in such a way that they give themselves for each other. They exist by rejoicing, serving, and loving each other. Following this way of existence, we, the church, must also exist in the world in a self-giving way.

However, this self-giving is very difficult. Because our sinful nature directs our love toward ourselves, not toward others. Only when we are freed from the gross ego of narcissism can we live a way of life

that gives of ourselves. So Jesus makes this request to those who want to follow him. "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. (Matthew 16:24)" Denying oneself means giving up the attitude of "I am the standard." It means not standing in a position to judge every situation and judge people. What is the first commandment of the Ten Commandments? "You shall have no other gods before me." This commandment is a stern warning that no one should attempt to stand in the position of God, that is, the standard.

Procrustes is a monster man from Greek mythology. He set up an iron bed at the gateway to Athens and made passers-by lie down on it. It is said that he killed tall travelers by cutting them off, and killing short travelers by stretching them out. He could not tolerate the differences. He saw everything that was different from himself as dangerous and something to be destroyed. But in this era, could it be that churches have become Procrustes? The church has not hesitated to call people who have different thoughts and positions as heretics, Satan, and antichrists, and has committed acts of destroying their character in the name of faith. Going to the cross is a denial of power. Isn't that true? The cross is a rebellion against a world ruled by violence. However, in today's church, the cross is being polluted by power. The church is the flattery of those who seek to secure status and wealth by unilaterally following the views of those in power. The image of the church that the world understands is that it is a closed group that does not even try to understand other people's opinions and arguments. It closes off its openness to others and portrays it as a closed group tightly bound together by 'our consciousness', or gang culture. We must recognize that this is how people outside the church view us. With this way of life, we cannot reveal God's love to the world. Rather, we run the risk of obscuring God's essence. As an 'in-between' being, human beings must acknowledge 'differences.' God's love cannot be expressed through violence that adjusts the differences between people to one's own standards. Only an attitude that acknowledges and accepts the diversity and uniqueness that comes from differences can enrich the world.

5.

We are entering the last week of Lent. The last week before Easter is called Passion Week. Passion Week is a time when we reflect on the cross of Jesus Christ and live a life of carrying the cross. It is a special season when we make a resolution to live well. The cross is a place where I deny myself, and it is also a symbol of offering myself completely for others. Passion Week is the period in which we cut off with the sharp sword of self-denial the force of self-love that holds us captive like gravity. Rather than cutting off others with the violence of self-love and our own standards, we must cut off self-love in the bud with a sharp sword. Without the self-giving of those who are sent, there is no possibility of God's love being conveyed to this world. There is no way for the love of Jesus on the cross to be known to the world without a life of denying oneself and taking up one's cross. Rather than the Gravity of self-love that loves us, we must let the Grace of God's love that gives us control us. Gravity is the force that pulls us down, but Grace is the force that pulls us up.

We are God's children sent into the world. As sent ones, we have the responsibility to reveal God the Father's love to the world. Those who are sent reveal God in the world through self-giving. As I've said it before, we don't need a missionary to prove that 1 plus 1 is 2. Because everyone in the world just believes it. But in order for God to show that love is real, He needs someone to prove it. People in the world will never believe it unless they see people living it. You are missionaries sent into the world. What is the existence of missional being? It is self-giving. Instead of cutting out others, I give myself away to gain them. The incarnation of Jesus was truly the culmination of love in which He gave Himself to overcome the difference between God and humans. I pray in the name of the Lord that we too may live an incarnate life, that is, a life of self-giving that leads many people to God.

(Question for the small groups)

Through the Word, we learn that the way of existence of those who are sent lies in giving of oneself. Why is self-giving difficult and how can we overcome it?