

Text: Mark 1:1-8

Title: Way maker

1.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther affixed the "95 Theses" in Latin on the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral. The document, "Disputatio," which means "dispute," sparks the "Reformation," which became the most powerful and explosive resistance movement in Christian history. Why did Luther have to write 'Disputatio', which is called '95 Theses'? What was he trying to argue with this document? The main content of the rebuttal was against the 'Plenary indulgence (免罰符)'. The word "indulgences" was literally an amulet to avoid punishment. At that time, Catholics believed in Purgatory. Purgatory was believed to be somewhere between heaven and hell. It was believed that the giving of the living could reduce the time of the dead in purgatory. It was believed that if you put a coin in the treasury for someone who died before you, the soul of the dead will be transferred from purgatory to heaven with the sound of the coin falling. The problem, however, was that this pardon became a means of making money for the priests. Many of the priests tried to pay off their debts with the sale of indulgences. In addition, under the pretext of building St. Peter's Basilica, indulgences were sold at the initiative of the Pope. Martin Luther resisted through the '95 Theses' that this sale of indulgences was wrong, contrary to the Bible. He resisted to follow the right path, the opposite of the path that everyone at the time followed without thinking.

Martin Luther's resistance movement spread throughout Europe through Reformers such as Ulrich Zwingli and Jean Calvin. The Reformers set the will of great reform, "Let's go back to the Bible." The slogan contained the earnest desire to return to true Christianity that follows the original will and purpose of the Bible, rather than Christianity distorted by the self-interest of the priests. The Latin word "Ad Fontes (back to the sources)," which means "toward the water source" or "let's return to the water source," indicated the direction of the new path the Reformers were going to make. The resentment against false religion, which began with a strong doubt, 'Is this religion?' fueled the Reformation. At that time, the Reformers risked their lives to carry out their will. 'Protestant' was a sarcastic term for them, but it was also an accurate description of their way of life. It means that their life had a different direction from others. Protestant means those who go in the opposite direction against the direction of the world. How do you live on the anniversary of the Reformation, which commemorates the will of the Reformation, to live up to the will of the reformers? We would like to re-adjust the direction of our lives through the stories of these two people.

2.

October 26th is the day that Ahn Jung-geun killed Ito Hirobumi at Harbin Station. Novelist Kim Hoon published his novel "Harbin" this summer with a heart in debt to Ahn Jung-geun. He has been tracking the life of Ahn Jung-geun for many years, collecting data, and illuminating his life through a novel called 'Harbin'. A few weeks ago, I finally got a book 'Harbin' and read it right away. As I read the novel, I kept asking these questions. "If I were Ahn Jung-geun... Would I have been able to do that?" , "What was the power that Ahn Jung-geun had to carry out his beliefs?" He passed away at the age of thirty-two. At the time of his death, his third child was an infant who had never even seen his father's face. If I had been Ahn Jung-geun, I would not have been able to make such a decision by abandoning his wife and children.

Ahn Jung-geun was a Catholic. He was a man of faith in Christ. His family was a powerful family in Haeju, Hwanghae-do, with Catholic beliefs. He was able to live comfortably under the authority of his family. But he dared to choose the rough road. He had two sons under his eldest daughter. He goes on his own to the Russian Primorsky Territory to fight for independence when his youngest son is in the womb of his wife. Like David running to Goliath with five water millstones, he heads to Harbin Station with seven bullets in his pistol. Ahn Jung-geun understood that it was God's will to kill Ito. He believed that one man's madness drove many people to death and made them unhappy. He was convinced that getting rid of Ito was the way to peace in the East. According to his belief, he fired six of his seven bullets, three of which pierced Ito's vital points. This revolutionary attempt, launched by a rural youth in Hwanghae Province, caused a great stir and ignited the independence movement.

The Catholic Church, which baptized Ahn Jung-geun, draws a line with the incident by Ahn Jung-geun for political reasons. The French priest Mutel, who was in charge of Catholicism in Joseon (Korea) at the time, condemned Ahn Jung-geun as a murderer. Even when priest Willem of the hometown church who baptized Ahn Jung-geun requested to go to Yeosu Jail to perform the sacrament of confession, priest Mutel did not allow it. Priest Willem, who was also a Frenchman, abandoned Mutel's will and personally went to Ahn Jung-geun to perform the sacrament of his confession. It was three days before Ahn Jung-geun died. The Catholic Church did not recognize Ahn Jung-geun's righteous deeds until 1993. It wasn't until August 1993 that Cardinal Kim Su-hwan said, "His action was an act in the process of carrying out the war of independence in the face of Japanese imperial aggression, and it is self-defense and deserves to be viewed as a righteous action" admitting it was an effort for greater peace. Ahn Jung-geun's act was not recognized as a murder that killed one person, but as a righteous one that removed the culprit that harmed the peace of many people.

What surprised me while reading the novel was that Ahn Jung-geun decided to shoot Ito Hirobumi himself. That is, it was planned and carried out on its own without any direction from the superior. A fire was burning in his heart. He had a strong will to sacrifice his life for the sake of peace in the East. None of the persecutions that his wife, children, and his family would endure could not stop him. Just as the fire of reform ignited by Martin Luther spread throughout Europe, Ahn Jung-geun's righteous

action becomes the sparks of many subsequent independence movements. The determination and action of one man, just a country man and a catcher, became a way, and many people followed it.

3.

The Gospel of Mark also introduces a humble man and guides the path he made. The Gospel of Mark introduces that the path he walked will be the path that Jesus Christ will follow. This means that the direction of the path Jesus was walking in coincided with the direction of his path. Both his father and mother were of the tribe of Levi, a priestly family. He also had a life with a guaranteed future as a priest. If he had become a priest, he would have been respected by the people and would have been able to live well. But he was the one with the secret of birth. His parents gave birth to him at old age. When she conceived him, he received a prophecy from an angel of God. Simply put, the prophecy was that he would prepare the way for the Messiah to come. The angel told me that preparing the way would convert many people (Luke 1:15-18). He was not doomed to live the life of an ordinary priest. Upon reaching his adulthood, he left his home in Jerusalem and went into the wilderness of Judea to make his way. He refused to take a seat of respect. And he did not really care about eating well and living well. His only concern was to do God's will. God's will for him was to prepare the way of the Messiah. He was a way maker paving a new path.

Perhaps from his childhood, the words of Isaiah 40:3 were attached to the head of his desk. "A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' " John the Baptist's vision and mission were clear. It is to prepare the way for the Messiah and to make his way straight. John the Baptist, like Martin Luther, marked an era. John played the role of a forerunner between the Old and New Testaments. It is because the way for Jesus to come was made through John's activity. Luther was also a revolutionary figure that separated the medieval and modern times. Through Ahn Jung-geun's righteous actions, Koreans were able to dream of a world of peace again. John, Luther, and Ahn Jung-geun were revolutionaries who changed the times in that sense.

John the Baptist's revolution did not begin in a crowded square. He was but a cry in the wilderness. The wilderness is a remote place, isolated from everything, in an empty and desolate field. As I said before, the wilderness is a separate and isolated space where no one can help. But what in the world was John the Baptist doing there? His cry was simple. "Repent. And be baptized." But what was the power behind his simple cry that so many people flocked to him? Isn't it amazing? He is but a cry in the wilderness, yet many are listening to him. People felt the authority of his words, and they came to him and began to be baptized. Even the Herod family who ruled Palestine could not ignore the voice of a poor prophet in the wilderness. I always find this part mysterious. Where did John the Baptist's authority come from?

John the Baptist was wary of the Pharisees and priests who were enjoying privileges centered on the temple. He left the priestly privilege and went into the wilderness. He wanted to return to the Word to live by the Word, and cut himself off from all he relied on. Rather, he went into the wilderness to find the source of the spring. He, too, chose to live in the wilderness, remembering the life in which their ancestors experienced God's presence and were led in the wilderness. In the wilderness, where he could depend on nothing, he wanted to test whether God's word really works or not. In that wilderness he received strong guidance from God. Elijah, who was his predecessor, also had God's powerful guidance in the wilderness. He was a tough revolutionary with the heart of Elijah.

4.

Then, should we also go into the wilderness like John the Baptist? John the Baptist says: "Repent and bring forth fruit befitting repentance." The tools that made the way for the Lord to come were repentance and the fruits of repentance. However, this simple request is a heavy demand that is not easy because it is a very powerful request that shakes our entire existence. Because repenting and bearing the fruits of repentance is like a revolution. The Chinese characters for revolution (革命) mean leather (革) and life (命). The reason I said that repenting and bearing the fruits of repentance is like a revolution is because it is something you risk your life for. Wouldn't it be a revolution to peel off skin to make leather, to become a new person, and to be born anew?

Becoming Christians begins with repentance. To be a disciple of Christ is to choose a way of life that is completely different from the way you used to live. The Greek word for repentance is "Metanoia", which means to completely change the direction of your life. It is a life that sets a life goal, and a life target completely differently. It is not just a life of living as a believer only by the appearance of the church, just in moderation. It is a life of throwing off the shell completely and taking the kernel. It is not using God for my own desires, but a life that renews my desires for God. You may have to protest in the opposite direction to the way of life that everyone in the world follows. Even if you die of starvation, you struggle to return to the Word that is the source of your life. How can you believe this in moderation? It is impossible without a revolution that completely peels off my skin to create a new person and completely revive it. Therefore, after repentance, baptism was performed as a new born ordinance.

John the Baptist knew this. His own life was so feeble, but he knew that if people gathered to follow in the footsteps he had walked, a path would be made there. That is why John walked and walked the path of true life in the wilderness. His way of life became a way, leading many to the Truth, Jesus.

5.

John the Baptist's revolution began in the wilderness and struck all Judea. The life of repentance that John demanded is specifically introduced in Luke 3. It was to bear the fruit of life. If you repent, you must change your life. However, it should be noted that the change in life had to be concretely revealed

in the attitude toward neighbors. Whoever has two sets of underwear should give it to the one who doesn't have it, and whoever has surplus food should share it with his neighbor. Have you ever wondered if expensive clothes that you haven't worn in your closet for over two years and food that you haven't eaten in your freezer for over half a year aren't yours, but your neighbor's? Do you have a surplus salary? Could it be that it is a gift from God to share with our neighbors? Without sharing and sharing with your neighbors in your life, your repentance is just a shell. You must repent again and bear fruit worthy of repentance. John demands to tax collectors and soldiers; Don't use your job to take more from others. Don't trample on the dignity of your neighbors with your elevated status. In other words, don't be rude. The way of life where everyone lived as equal neighbors was the path that John wanted to walk.

It was a way of life that respected others and reminded us of the preciousness of his life. As I say often, loving neighbor that I understand is “to make the other person realize their dignity and preciousness as a human being through me.” It may not be a big deal for me to share my food, clothes, and money, but the recipient feels honored through his service. This way of life of sharing and giving is the way of life of Christians, different from the world. This way of life is the path Jesus walked.

The Reformation and real revolution that must take place in this age must occur in our attitudes in life. A life oriented toward God naturally leads to a life oriented toward neighbors. Because Jesus wants his followers to walk together on the path to love their neighbors. This is not the Rival Gospel that all the people of the world follow, but the life that follows the true Gospel. It is a life that follows the story of Jesus, not the Rival story of success that the world seeks.

Look at what is happening in the world right now. The accident at the SPC Pyeongtaek factory, which does not care about the safety of workers only to make a profit, is a cross-section of the rival gospel of this age. SPC did not inspect the machine despite several accidents in which employees' arms were caught in the machine. As a result, a non-contract worker in her 20s died when her apron got sucked into the machine while mixing bread sauce. But the next day, it is said that they restarted the factory with the machine at the scene of the incident covered with a white cloth. He offered condolences by giving various kinds of bread to the bereaved families of the deceased, which gave them misery. Beloved One Heart Church congregation, this is the rival gospel that is dominating the world. It is a terrifying and demonic idea that even human dignity can be trampled on for profit. This is the bare face of a consumerist capitalist society where profit has become an idol.

The source of the spring that the Bible speaks of is this: “Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.” This is our fountain source, which summarizes the entire Bible. An attitude of life that treats and respects neighbors like human beings is a way of life that goes against the false gospel of the age of consumption. A revolution must start with something very small and mundane. Reform begins

with reorienting our lives and adjusting our direction. If the life and words of Jesus are the truth, wouldn't it be the right life to throw me into his way of life? With the heart of Elijah, John the Baptist still calls us today. "How long are you going to sit on the fence? If God is the real God, follow him; if it's Baal (Mammon), follow him. Make up your minds! (1 Kings 18:21). We invite you to that small revolution and small reform. With Jesus and John the Baptist, why don't you walk towards the narrow and low but upright path? Why don't we walk together in such a way of life of reaching out, sharing and giving to the neighbors next to me? Instead of thinking, 'Will the world change if I live like that?', how about making a bright and warm world just around you? You don't have to be as grandiose as Martin Luther or Ahn Jung-geun. A small change in your actions will make a difference. And the path will become clearer and clearer for those who want to follow it. We believe that small changes in our lives together with our neighbors will become the way and make this world beautiful. You are a way maker if you are living like that, aren't you?