

Scripture : John 17:9-11

Sermon: Look with Eyes of Wonder / Translated by: Melody Ouk

1. Even When the Flowers Fade

"Even when the flowers fade, I have never forgotten you." This is a line from the poem <The Evening When the Flowers Fade> by poet Jeong Ho-seung. It expresses the longing for a person with whom one shared a beautiful love, like the blooming of flowers, a longing that continues even after the flowers have faded. Now, Jesus is concluding his three years of ministry, bearing the cross and bringing his beautiful life to an end. The flowers are fading. As Jesus concludes his life, he prays for his disciples who have been with him for three years, sharing both joys and sorrows. Although Jesus was not married, he considered his disciples as his children. This is Jesus praying to God the Father with the heart of a parent who must leave their children behind as he nears the end of his life.

Jesus begins his prayer for his disciples in verse 9, saying, "I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me". The pronoun "I" (Ego) is added to this sentence. While it wouldn't be strictly necessary to include it, the use of "Ego" emphasizes the subject performing the prayer. It means, "It is I, and no one else, who prays for them." It emphasizes the special relationship Jesus has with his disciples. He also contrasts the world with his disciples, praying specifically for the disciples and not for the world. Consider this: In John 3:16, one of the key verses in the Gospel of John, what does Jesus say? "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." This sentence expresses how much God loves the cosmos, the world. Jesus has been saying that he will sacrifice his life for the world. Yet, here, Jesus is saying that his thoughts are focused on his disciples more than on the world. This sentence reveals how deeply Jesus cares for his disciples and how heartbroken he is to leave them behind.

2. People Sent by God

Although not expressed in our Korean Bible translation, the Greek Bible includes a conjunction indicating the reason in the last sentence of verse 9: "but for those you have given me, for they are yours." What is the reason for emphasizing that they are the Father's people? In verse 10, Jesus says that everything that is mine belongs to the Father, and everything that belongs to the Father is mine. The statement that what belongs to the Father is mine, and what is mine belongs to the Father, indicates that the relationship

between God and Jesus is a very close one, like that of one body. This means that Jesus did not arbitrarily choose his disciples, but recognized them as people given to him by God. Because they were people entrusted to him by God, Jesus has diligently cared for them for the past three years. We also need the perspective to recognize the people around us as people sent by God. The people around me are not just extras who simply revolve around my stage. We need the awareness that they are people sent by God. They are also leading actors in God's kingdom. My colleagues at work, my neighbors in my neighborhood, and the members of my small group at church are all people that God has sent to you. If I love God, I can also love the people God has sent. I wish I could love my neighbor with a heart that loves God, but we often think that the people around us are unrelated to us. The biggest reason for this is that their current appearance or behavior doesn't please me. I also find it very difficult to love my neighbors in the house I recently moved into. They open their garage door wide and play loud music while doing something inside. Their inconsiderate attitude bothers me. However, I am praying that God will help me to have the thought that they are people He has sent to me. I'm also thinking that I need to do more than just think about it; I need to make some kind of reaching out gesture. Looking at the current appearance of brothers and sisters in the church, colleagues at work, or people in the neighborhood, you might not want to get close to them. However, if that person is a person of God, and someone God has sent to me, then our attitude should definitely change.

3. Pygmalion: What You Earnestly Desire Will Come True.

Now, let's carefully examine Jesus' prayer. The Lord confesses, "I have been glorified through them." This is the past perfect tense of the verb. It means that He has already received glory. Strictly speaking, the disciples would betray Jesus and flee within a few hours. Jesus knew that they would betray and abandon Him. Yet, the Lord says that He has already received glory through them. He is not judging them by their present state, but looking ahead to the future changes that will occur in them. It can be said that Jesus is receiving in advance the future glory He will receive through His disciples. In other words, Jesus already sees the potential within His disciples and foresees that they will live lives that glorify Him, and He is transforming that into an earnest prayer.

You may have heard of the Pygmalion effect. It's a psychological term that describes how what you expect influences the actual outcome. There was a man named Pygmalion who lived in Cyprus, according to Greek mythology. He was so disappointed by the flaws he saw in

women that he eventually came to despise them and decided to live his life without ever marrying. Because he was a sculptor, he sculpted a woman out of ivory so beautiful that no living woman could compare to her. Pygmalion fell in love with his own creation because the sculpture was so beautiful. He dressed the statue in beautiful clothes and adorned it with jewels. Not satisfied with that, he even laid the statue in his bed and slept with it. On the festival day of Aphrodite, the goddess Aphrodite read Pygmalion's heart and breathed life into the statue, making her a real person. This is a story about a statue that came to life as a woman, and the sculptor who created her, falling in love and living happily ever after. Based on this story, the phenomenon where fervent desires and intense love bring about a desired outcome in reality is called the Pygmalion effect. Jesus saw the love for God within his disciples. He knew during the past three years they made many mistakes, said many foolish things, and would even betray him, but Jesus did not abandon his trust and love for them. He earnestly desired that they would change and ultimately live lives that glorified God, and he transformed that desire into prayer. Love is about hoping, believing, and waiting.

4. The Eyes to See God's Army

Sometimes, we are disappointed by the current state of the people around us. Parents, in particular, worry about their children. They worry whether their children will be able to live decent lives. The Bible says, "According to your faith be it unto you." If you believe that, it will happen. Even if things are disappointing and possibilities seem nonexistent now, we need the eyes to discern the inherent and potential possibilities within them. And according to that faith and hope, they will change. Therefore, what we should pray for is the ability to see the people around us through the eyes of the Lord. It is about having faith in the potential that lies beyond the visible reality. There is a story in the Old Testament that supports this. It is from 1 Samuel 17:26. In the time of David, the Philistine army invaded and harassed Judah. The Philistines, with the giant Goliath at the forefront, threatened the army of Judah encamped in the Valley of Elah every day. Goliath mocked the army of Judah as a disorganized rabble and tormented them for 40 days. David, receiving his father's command to check on his three brothers fighting in the war, packed food and went to the battlefield. David saw Goliath firsthand and heard his insulting words, and he couldn't bear it. Then David went to King Saul and asked to fight Goliath, saying the words in verse 26: **"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"** Even to David's eyes, the army of Judah was indeed a disorganized rabble. But David looked at the army of Judah through the eyes of God. While it's undeniable that his own army,

trembling in fear before the threats of a single Goliath, was a disorganized rabble, David saw the potential within them. After David defeated Goliath, it wasn't David who defeated the Philistine army, but the people of Judah—God's army. The army of Judah, which had been trembling in fear for 40 days, became God's army and bravely fought against the Philistines. It was David's faith that awakened the courage and potential dormant within the army of Judah. David saw reality differently, through God's eyes. We too need to look at the people around us through God's eyes. We shouldn't be disappointed by their current state, but instead become someone who awakens the potential and possibilities within them. Jesus didn't despair over the current state of his disciples, but offered up to God, as a cause for thanksgiving, the hope and expectation of the glory that would come through them. Again, love is about hoping, believing, and waiting.

5. A Single Grain of Wheat, and Its Expansive Power

Jesus' prayer is fervent: "I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one." Jesus is praying earnestly. Just as Jesus glorified the Father through his unity with God, he is now praying that his disciples may be united so that they too may glorify God. I sometimes wonder if Jesus wasn't being too reckless. What exactly did he believe in that he entrusted everything to his disciples and then left? Honestly, it seems like there are no tangible results that Jesus achieved. From our perspective in this era, Jesus seems incredibly inefficient. He didn't systematically train his disciples. Unlike the churches of today, he didn't create a multi-stage, systematic discipleship training program, giving out certificates and telling them to go and make disciples of all nations. Instead, he only spoke in parables that were difficult for even his disciples to understand, revealing the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven. He didn't create educational institutions like the Academia or Lyceum of the Greek philosophers, nor did he write books. He simply lived as he spoke, and spoke as he lived. Now, he is about to be crucified and die, but there seem to be no tangible fruits of his labor. What exactly did Jesus believe in that he was willing to return to God the Father?

In the Gospel of John, Jesus summarized his life as a single grain of wheat: "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (John 12:24). Jesus knew that although there was no fruit immediately, fruit would soon follow. He also compared the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed. A mustard seed is very small, but once it sprouts, it grows and expands rapidly. Jesus

knew that the Kingdom of God, like the seed, might seem inactive at first, but once it sprouts, it will expand and grow rapidly. Even though there may be no immediate fruit, Jesus is willing to become that grain of wheat and that mustard seed, to die and be buried. He believed in the expansive power of the Kingdom of God that his seemingly insignificant disciples would create when they became one with God. That is why Jesus did not despair and was willing to return to God.

6. A World of Wonder

Through the scripture, it seems that Jesus' gaze upon his disciples was filled with wonder. We need to look at the world and people with eyes of wonder. The word Enlightenment means shedding light to bring understanding. Here, light refers to reason. Enlightenment is the belief that humanity can understand this world through reason and knowledge. Children are amazed and fascinated when they see a rainbow. However, adults feel no such emotion, possessing scientific knowledge that a rainbow is created by light reflecting off water droplets. They simply say that children are like that because they lack knowledge. Knowledge, in fact, becomes an obstacle to understanding the essence. William Wordsworth, an 18th-century poet, sings about seeing a rainbow in his poem "My Heart Leaps Up":

하늘의 무지개를 바라보면
가슴이 뛰네.
어린 시절에도 그러했고
어른이 된 지금도 그러하니,
늙어서도 그러하기를.
아니면 차라리 죽게 해다오.
어린이는 어른의 아버지.
바라건대 나의 나날들이
자연에 대한 경애敬愛로 묶여 있기를.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

The poet isn't saying that it's important to know how a rainbow is made, but rather that we shouldn't lose the sense of wonder a child feels when seeing one. The poet calls this feeling of awe and wonder upon seeing a rainbow "Natural Piety." It's about looking at the world with different eyes, looking at the people around us with different eyes. God didn't create this world without reason. God didn't create the world out of necessity. God created this world because He couldn't contain the overflowing love within Him; that love overflowed and created this world. God was so full of love and joy within Himself that He wanted to give something

to humanity, so He created the world and invited us into His kingdom. God's love is so powerful that it overflows into the universe and onto the earth. Love is the source of the expansive power of God's kingdom. I once heard someone say, "Because God created the heavens and the earth with His word, the whole world is filled with His word." The people around us are God's creations, built by His word. We need to look at them with eyes of wonder. Our perspective on them needs to change. Even if we see weakness and shortcomings in them, please don't be disappointed. Although they may be just small seeds now, let's imagine the fruit they will bear and wait patiently. And let's pray like Jesus: "Lord, receive glory through them." Thinking about how precious each person God has sent to us is, I would like to conclude this sermon with the poem "The Visitor" by poet Jung Hyun-jong.

사람이 온다는 건	The arrival of a person
실은 어마어마한 일이다	is actually an enormous event.
그는	Because they come
그의 과거와 현재와	with their past, their present,
그리고	and
그의 미래와 함께 오기 때문이다	their future.
한 사람의 일생이 오기 때문이다	Because one's whole life arrives.
부서지기 쉬운	The heart, which is fragile,
그래서 부서지기도 했을	and because it's fragile has likely been broken
마음이 오는 것이다 그 갈피를	before,
아마 바람은 더듬어 볼 수 있을	is what arrives. A heart whose depths
마음	perhaps only the wind can understand.
내 마음이 그런 바람을 흉내 낸다면	If my heart were to imitate that wind,
필경 환대가 될 것이다	it would surely become a welcoming embrace.

<Discussion Questions>

1. Please share what resonated with you most from today's sermon.
2. Let's share practical ways we can treat the world and the people God has sent into our lives with a sense of wonder and awe. (At next month's meeting, we will share the feelings and changes we experienced when we put these things into practice.)