

Scripture: Psalm 113:1-3 / 1 Samuel 30:17-25

Title: One Family

1.

May the grace and peace of our good Father God be with you all. Have you been at peace over the past week? Did you have a good Chuseok? There is a saying, “No more, no less, just like Chuseok.” It's only been about 3 years since I've been to the US, so on Chuseok, I think of my hometown. I want to eat Korean rice cake, and I miss my family a lot. I miss seeing my family members, eating around the same table and sharing sorrow and joy on holidays like Chuseok.

Still, there is a church community, so we receive great comfort from living abroad. The church is not a social organization, but a family-like community. Because in many ways the church resembles a family community.

As I said last week in Psalm 133, a community in which brothers and sisters are united is a community that God is pleased with and wants. Today, we would like to pay attention to the fact that there is a passage called “The Psalms of David,” which is the title of the 133th volume. Psalm 133 is the story of David's life. In what life story and experience did David confess, “How good and beautiful it is for brothers to live together in unity”? Let's dive into the story of David.

2.

God wanted to establish the kingdom of God on this earth through a community, not just one person. So, he made a covenant with the nation of Israel and established them as a covenant community. Covenant community means a nation that has made a covenant with God. God promised blessings to Israel, and Israel promised to send God's blessings to all nations in

exchange for receiving those blessings. As a covenant people, Israel had to show the world a beautiful model of the community.

David was a leader who understood this calling all too well. He has loved God since he was a shepherd tending sheep in the empty fields. God paid attention to David from the time he was in the field as a shepherd and anointed him as king. He dreamed of how to rule Israel in God's name when he ascended to the throne in Saul's place. However, contrary to his dreams and hopes, he is driven into the wilderness by his son-in-law and is driven away as a fugitive.

God trains the fugitive David to lead the community in the wilderness. He wanders through the wilderness of Israel, leading a community, experimenting with the kingdom of God. In 1 Samuel 22, there is a scene where people flock to David, who is taking refuge in the cave of Adullam.

“David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father’s household heard about it, they went down to him there. ²All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their commander. About four hundred men were with him.” (1 Samuel 22:1-2)

David himself was a fugitive, and the burden of taking care of four hundred people must have been enormous. And the people who came to him were not all normal people. They were people who had gone bankrupt because of debt, people who were full of resentment because of unfair trials, and people who had been discriminated against and bullied by people flocked to David. People who have such scars and pain are generally hostile and aggressive towards others. They continually hurt others. It would not have been an easy task to lead these rough people and create a community.

Also, it must have been difficult to fill the stomachs of 400 people. In 1 Samuel 30, a story a few years later, there are 600 soldiers who can go out for battle, meaning that the number of people in David's community grew significantly. This wouldn't have happened unless the community seemed very appealing. It must not have been easy for David to take them and live as a fugitive from Saul. So David decides to find a town and settle down.

⁵ Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?"

⁶ So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.

David flees to King Achish of Gath, the land of the Philistines. Then he asks King Achish to give him a city. But who are the Philistines? Their warrior, Goliath, was killed by David. So we can see how urgent David's situation was when he went to the Philistines, who were Israel's enemies.

But strangely, King Achish accepts David and his hundreds of people, so the Davidic community settle down and live there. However, as a war breaks out between the Philistines and Israel, David's position becomes complicated. David volunteers to help the Philistines in war against their fellow Israelites in order to survive. It was only then that the Philistine generals came to their senses and pressured King Achish, saying that David cannot go to war. In the end, David's army returned after three days' journey, back to Ziklag.

3.

Today's main story begins after David and the 600 soldiers returned to Ziklag. The Amalekites, another group of people, were looting and roaming the southern part of Israel. They attack the city of Ziklag, taking advantage of David and his soldiers still returning from the north. They broke into the castle and set fire to it, and captured women, children, and even the elderly. How did David feel when he saw the burned down city of Ziklag? The Bible tells us that David and his men wept together and wept until they had no more strength to weep. 1 Samuel 30:6 says that David's men rushed to kill him, blaming him for the deaths.

6"David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God."

But did David really do anything wrong? Still, people tend to seek out a scapegoat. David overcomes this predicament by relying on God. David asks God what to do, and God tells him to follow the Amalekites. As a God-centered community, the Davidic community follows David into battle, and they defeat the Amalekites in two days and return to Ziklag with all their family and loot. Not a single person was hurt because God protected them, and they found out that the more they depended on God, the more he provided and protected for their community.

But before this victory, there was an incident. 600 soldiers pursued the Amalek, but only 400 went into battle. 200 were left behind as they had already come a long way and were exhausted. They said to the others to go and fight for us, as we can't travel any more. Here we see the level of David's army. Even if they rushed in with a "if we die, we die together" mentality, their odds of victory are slim. Leaving 200 soldiers behind weakens their chances

even more. Regardless, 200 men rested by the brook of Besor, waiting for the other 400 soldiers to return from the battle. After two days, David defeated all the Amalekites, rescued his family, and returned to the resting soldiers at the brook of Besor, who were overjoyed and welcome David and his soldiers.

But what did the 200 resting soldiers look like in the eyes of the 400 who returned from fighting? They despised them. They had risked their lives to fight the last two days, coming back exhausted only to see the resting soldiers running to them and laughing. However, unlike them, their leader David warmly greeted those who have fallen behind, even declaring to share the loot equally with them.

Of the 400 men who fought, some wicked and mean men called David aside. "Leader, these people haven't done anything, you aren't possibly planning on sharing our loot with them? Just let them take their wives and children, and don't give them the loot we got from our fights," the men probably said. David establishes here a marvelous principle that will be established in his kingdom. It was a law for everyone to share and enjoy. David makes this confession. "The victories and spoils of war are the gifts the Lord has given us. The share of those who went to war and the share of those who remained and protected things; it should be the same. Everyone must share it equally." In Israel after David, this has been an important legal regulation. The kingdom of David had a different calling from the rest of the world. It was a dream for all to enjoy equality and live in peace under the Lord's rule.

4.

David hoped that the kingdom he would rule would be a kingdom governed by God's statutes and ordinances. He knew that where God's disposition and values are revered, God's rule is there. Where there is sharing and acceptance, God's kingdom will come.

What kind of church can we imagine through David's story of community? David's "life in which brothers live together in unity" was not a dream that was floating around. He actually created a covenant community through acceptance and sharing. He accepted those who were driven into the corners of Jewish society as brothers, and practiced a life of sharing with them. Acceptance and sharing were the way to become one and the way to love.

Looking at today's events, David was a man who knew what grace was. We know all too well that grace is something that even those who don't deserve, receive. David acknowledged that both the victory and the spoils of war were God's free grace. Because he received it for free, he did not hesitate to share. David practiced acceptance and sharing based on the grace of God that he received. And through that acceptance and sharing, David experienced and rejoiced how great the joy was of having brothers live together in unity.

When I think of acceptance, the words of Poet Kim Eung-gyo, professor of Korean literature at Sookmyung Women's University, come to mind. When we were young, we split up sides to play a game, with children with similar skills playing rock, paper, scissors. When there are an odd number of children after splitting the sides, there is always one left. The last child left was the least skilled of them all. When I was young, I was always the kkakdugi (the odd one out). The "Kakdugi" would go on the worse team. Poet Kim Eung-kyo says that this kkakdugi shares the

joy of victory, but does not take responsibility for defeat. It means that even if we lost, you can never blame the Kkadugi. However, the world we live in has become a harsh, and we've changed the name of kkakdugi to "being bullied". We need to create a warm community so that people who live with bullying in the world can live as a kkakdugi at church. We should strive to ensure that the grace and favor we have received flows to all who come to church. The atmosphere of the church, the body of Christ, must be accepting and sharing.

5.

In that sense, I like to call the church a "family". Kin is a word that emphasizes the meaning of living with the same surname and blood. However, family is a slightly broader concept. If you write "family (sik-ku)" in Chinese characters, it spells "meal (sik)" and "mouth (ku)." It means sharing a meal together. The words "community" and "communion" are almost identical. The time we partake in communion, sharing the body of Christ together, is called Community. We are people brought together by one meal. All of us gathered in the church are brothers and sisters. We pray the Lord's Prayer. The first verse begins like this: "Our Father in heaven." Not my father, He is called 'our father'. We are a community of children under one father. Since we have the same father, we are naturally brothers and sisters.

It reminds me of when I was young, sitting around a round table and eating. As a family of 12, we all shared a meal on two tables. While eating, an old man from the neighborhood always stops by. Then my mother would say, "Have you eaten?" and "Come and eat," inviting anyone else that stopped by. She thought of them as a family member, not a guest. Anyone who sat at the round table became a member of the family.

The church is a “table community” where we share communion, prepared by God. Anyone who comes here should be welcome. Anyone who comes here should be respected as a brother or sister. Whether it's been a month or a few years since joining the church, we are all a part of the same family. As a new pastor to Dahana Church, am I your brother? Are the new members of this church, whether it's been less than a month or almost a year, your brothers and sisters?

Like David's community in the wilderness, we all gather as a community in the middle of a wilderness world . The wilderness is a lonely place where no one can help. The wilderness is a lonely life like a kite that has fallen off a string. We are gathering as one family in the middle of such a wilderness world. Just as David experimented and practiced his community in the wilderness before he ascended to the throne, we are also building the kingdom of God on this earth through the church in anticipation of the kingdom of God to be established in the distant future. First, as those who received grace, we are practicing sharing and accepting so that God's love and grace can flow through us to others.

However, sharing and accepting is not so easy. For it is essential to deny oneself in order to accept the other. It is not easy for strong people to accept others. The Chinese character for “I (我)” is a combination of “hand (手)” and sword (戈). The character “I” looks like and represents an image of a hand holding a sword, protecting oneself. A strong ego refers to the standard one has, in other words, a person with strong self-righteousness. The Pharisees were so self-righteous that it was difficult for them to accept others. On the contrary, Jesus accepted everyone without imposing his standards on them. When people to Jesus, they felt accepted and at ease.

If we are to accept others, we must not impose our standards on others. I owe 10,000 talents. I have been forgiven of all that debt, and I am a person who has received grace. That is why I can tolerate and accept a brother who owes me only 1 denarius. The church, the body of Christ, must be loved equally by all under grace. Any sinner or any kind of person who comes here should be accepted and welcomed. Everyone is a brother and sister here, regardless of his status, background, or merit. Jesus Christ embraced everyone, despite being mocked as a friend of sinners and tax collectors. He was also nicknamed a drunkard and still tried to accept everyone. Wherever Jesus was, a table community was formed. He created a miracle from 2 fish and 5 breads, feeding thousands of people on an empty field, and even after he died on the cross, he went to Galilee to prepare breakfast for his disciples. Jesus accepted anyone as a member of the family and wanted to share with everyone.

We hope that Dahana Church will become a friend to many lonely people in Rochester as a family that shares the body of Jesus. We hope that we will be filled with the grace that God pours out, and that grace will flow through us and flow to those who need love. Like David's community, where many people came to enjoy a rest in the wilderness, I hope that Dahana Church will become a community of love and sharing.