

1/22/2023 One Heart Church

Text: Genesis 11:27-12:4

Title: The Man Chosen for All Peoples / Translated by Wi Chungil

1.

This is the story of my military days. The person with the title of chief sergeant is the person who acts as the mother of the unit. Think of him as someone who interferes and nags all areas of the unit. Sometimes he even gives his soldiers a hard time, like a mean mother-in-law. I don't remember what happened, but I was being punished on my knees in the chief's office. But then, this person started arguing with me. Since he knew I went to church, he must have wanted to argue with a church-related topic. "Hey~ Christianity started in Israel and only deals with the history of Israelis, so why should Koreans believe in it?" At the time, I couldn't clearly answer that question. Thanks to that, my punishment got longer. Why do we believe in the Bible, which is the religion of Israel in the eyes of the world and deals with the history of Israel? Why did God have to call the chosen nation of Israel? Why did he have to choose an old grandfather named Abram before Israel?

To understand the story, you need to understand the story in Genesis 1-11. The content up to Genesis 11 is about the primeval history of mankind. Primeval history refers to the universal history experienced in all periods of human civilization. In other words, it is a history that records phenomena that have repeatedly and universally appeared in history since the beginning of human civilization. In this primeval history, human history begins with good creation. But as time went on and history progressed, things took a turn for the worse. This was an unintended direction when God created the world and mankind. With the beginning of Genesis, there is a story of Adam and Eve who sympathize with the rebellion of the spiritual world and the rebellion of angelic beings. The rebellion of man with the serpent in Genesis 3 was not suppressed in the first place. It has only left us with a hint that it will be subdued in the apocalypse in the last days. The seed of the woman will appear and step on the serpent's head, but it will bruise its heel. The coup d'état of the snake and men against the God is not suppressed at the beginning, but is suppressed at the end. In Revelation 19-20, these coup d'état forces are thrown into the abyss under the name of 'the old serpent'. The theme that penetrates the beginning and end of this human race is the Kingdom of God. In Genesis 3, human history has become a cyclical history since humans sympathized with the forces of evil. In other words, it is a history that just cycles without any purpose (telos, eschaton). In detail, sin and judgment for it cycle. In the course of this cyclical history, many types of mankind emerged. They are the Adam type, the Cain type, the Nephilim type, and the Tower of Babel type. Adam-type mankind is a mankind that has disobeyed God's command and pursued its own desires. The Cain-type mankind is a human being who has not endured enough to kill his own family and has not overcome the temptation of sin. The Nephilim type of Noah's era was a lewd and violent mankind who killed and slaughtered other peoples beyond their own family. In Genesis 11, mankind shows arrogance over the position of the one and only God. God decides to choose one person in this process. It was the beginning of God's redemption plan as an alternative to the existing mankind repeating the vicious cycle of sin and judgment. He wanted to begin a redemptive history in the midst of a cyclical history of sin and evil. Now, God intervenes in universal history, and it is a history that will be led by the chosen person and the chosen people. Universal history will be driven by the history of the chosen people.

2.

Genesis 10 and 11 contain genealogies. The reason for the genealogy is that the savior of mankind will come from the woman's descendant (Genesis 3:15). Since God will send a savior from among the woman's descendants to strike the serpent's head, the genealogy here has a redemptive-historical meaning. The redemptive-historical meaning means that God directly leads history, leading it in the direction of redeeming all mankind. In particular, in the second half of Genesis 11, the genealogy of the Semites who were chosen by God appears. Abram, the son of Terah, a descendant of Shem, was chosen. And God commands Abram. "You will be a blessing". But why Abram? Why is God calling Abram, a 75-year-old man who has already completely lost the possibility of childbirth, to begin this great work of redemption? It would have been much easier for a 20-year-old punky young man.

The culmination of God's blessing to mankind in Genesis 1 was, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." This blessing of creation was the fundamental driving force that sustained all living things and mankind. With this blessing of creation, the genealogy that has been continuously passed down is in danger of being stopped by Abram. From the point of view of the blessings of creation, Abram and Sarai are cursed. Sarai's infertility in the countless repetitions of giving birth is like a sudden dissonance. We need to pay attention to the situation in which the genealogy of Abram's relatives father's house is in danger of not being continued. Abram was a man who, by natural means, failed to carry on the genealogy of his native father's family. The 'your father's household' symbolizes a solid culture built on patriarchal ideology. In these patriarchal societies of the ancient Near East, couples who failed to produce male heirs were thought to be cursed by the gods. In addition, Ur of the Chaldeans, Abram's hometown, was the center of a pagan religion that worshiped the moon god. Before he was called, Abram must have lamented himself that he was cursed by the moon god and was infertile. His life would have been lethargic and unmotivated. If you imagine Abram before God's call came, you can feel his gloomy reality. He must have been living a life neglected outside of God's purpose. He was in perfect condition to sink into fatalism. God is calling such Abram from the curse

3.

God commands Abram to "Leave your country and your relatives and your father's house." He commands Abram to leave the land where you live, the place where you were born, and the house of your father. How would you feel if you suddenly received an order like this? Wouldn't it be embarrassing? It means leaving a familiar place and moving to a completely unfamiliar land. The mainland relative father's house, again, refers to a strict social system established under patriarchal authority. Breaking free from this social system was too radical a demand. Because it is a demand to leave all my safety nets. Demanding the severing of all kinship, cultural and religious ties would have been a very difficult order.

Abram had to go through a creative separation, to sever all such solidarity and ties. The story of escape prior to Exodus begins with Abram. God is not calling him out at random. He gives him a promise in exchange for leaving. Abram held on to this promise and ventured to escape by faith. God's promises were fourfold. It is the land, the great nation, the name, the presence and protection. Among these four promises, the most amazing promise is that Abram, who cannot be passed on to his own generation, will be made the ancestor of a great nation.

Why did Abram have to leave his native land, his relatives and his father's house, and go to the land indicated by God? It is so that he can become a blessing to all peoples of the world. In order to become a blessing to all peoples of the world, Abram had to escape, separated from the mainland and the bonds of his kinsmen and father's house. What is the meaning of the order to leave the clan society, which is like a life that can support and protect an individual?

Now, it means that the kingdom of God that will begin with Abram is not a nation established in the existing way. In order to renew the original history of mankind, which had been meaninglessly circulated by the bond of blood and body, it was necessary to start the kingdom of God on a new foundation. This is because the kingdom of God was not to be established through the ties of blood and flesh, but had to be built solely on faith in God. That's why Abram had to leave his native land, his relative's father's house. That is because the kingdom of God is not a nation created by regionalism, race, or ideology. It is a new nation built on faith by those who believe in and obey the Word of God.

The Korean Bible is interpreted according to Korean order, but if we interpret the purpose clause ("so that~") of verse 3 correctly, it is as follows. "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, so that all peoples of the earth may be blessed through you." In this purpose clause, God's intention to make Abram the reference point for blessings and curses is clearly revealed. The reason is to bless all people. If it was not possible to bring back all of the fallen mankind at once, then there was no choice but to bring all peoples back through one chosen person. Now, God is not negotiating with all mankind, but with the chosen person and the chosen people. The reason He is negotiating with them is very clear. "To bless all nations," that is, to save all nations. God is starting a eugenics experiment right now. He's experimenting with starting with one good seed and spreading the good fruit all over the world. God picked up one seed, Abram, who was chosen to save all mankind. However, the seed is an insignificant seed that seems to have no possibility of sprouting when people see it.

4.

God is calling Abram as an alternative to the Adamic mankind who destroyed the whole world. To bless Abram means to follow the same path of faith as Abram. God will bless the lives of those who, like Abram, make a decision of faith and decide to follow the promise. Conversely, 'he who curses him will be cursed' means that those who oppose the path of faith and obedience followed by Abram will be hostile. Galatians 3:7 says that all Gentiles who walk the path of faith like Abraham can become Abraham's descendants. "Know, therefore, that those who are born of the faith are the descendants of Abraham."

I wrote about it once in a column the other day. The one-line summary of the Old Testament that I understand is "the story of Israel's failed exodus." Exodus means the separation and escape of body and spirit from Egypt. It is choosing a new value system, not an existing value system. The Exodus is the decision to escape from the life of being satisfied to some extent under the Egyptian pharaoh system. Because the Egyptian pharaonic system is a way of life that goes against the kingdom of God. The archetype of this Exodus is appearing in Abram. It is a decision to leave by believing in God's new possibilities, not in one's ability and potential to grow old at the age of 75.

This decision is required of all those who decide to become descendants of Abraham. Being a Christian, being a disciple of Jesus Christ, begins with a holy separation and exodus. It starts with holding on to the word of God, the promise of God, instead of the values that protect me and that I have relied on.

Thankfully, because we live as immigrants, we may feel more sensitively than others what it means to leave the 'mainland relatives and father's house'. You know the feeling of being away from home and separated from family. Coincidentally, today is the Lunar New Year holiday in Korea. When it's a holiday like this, don't you think of the mainland relative's father's house? I believe that there will be God's plan towards us who left the mainland relatives and father's house. Isn't God putting us here to be a blessing in this place? I asked a person who has lived an immigrant life for over 30 years. Don't you feel like going back to Korea? Then he said that my family lives here, so I can't leave. My family in Korea is also a family, but the bond with them

has faded, and I have become accustomed to life here. I think our journey of faith is exactly like this. At first, when we leave the values we are used to, God's values are very unfamiliar and we are tempted to return to the previous ones. However, once the promise given by God is fulfilled and you begin to enjoy the joy of obedience, you cannot leave this joy.

We believe that God is promising the blessings promised to Abram to us who are away from our relatives and father's house on New Year's Day. Just as God made Abram a source of blessing, God is calling us to make us a source of blessing.

5.

God's call turns even the cursed life into a source of blessing. Rather, through the curse, God gave the promise and opened a new future. Abram and Sarai, a 75-year-old infertile couple, had a cursed life. However, God is preparing a new future for this couple who have lived through years of sorrow in the midst of infertility. Encouraged by God's Word, they decide to embark on an adventurous journey. Without the power of God's Word and God's promises, we cannot escape from our old life. God's Word has enough power to give you a turning point in your life. We suffer in the curses and dissonances that fill our lives. What we must hold on to at that time is the Word of God. When we encounter God's Word, a new page in our lives opens. The word of God calls out those who have fallen into fatalism and nihilism and leads them to the promised land. People like Nick Vujicic live in very bad conditions without limbs. No one can blame him if he lives in fatalism. However, he impresses many with his bright face and attitude towards life. Helen Keller suffered a triple disability losing her sight, hearing and speech when she was 19 months old. But she went to college because of Miss Sullivan's devoted love. Until he passed away at the age of 87, he gave a light of hope to many people with disabilities. It is said that the word she loved the most was 2 Corinthians 4:18, "What is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." God's Word makes us overcome fatalism. It is God's Word and God's promise that opens up new possibilities in our lives and guides us to a new future. I hope that we too, like Nick Vujicic and Helen Keller, will hold on to God's promise and stand up from the cursed things in our lives.

Today's message looked at the starting point of God's rectification of the world's disorder that began with Adam and Eve. Through Noah's flood, God wanted to renew this world even by returning to the world before the disorderly creation, but it did not work according to God's will. After Noah, mankind was driving this world into disorder through stronger hostility and rebellion toward God. To rectify that, God took out a hidden card. God chose an insignificant elderly couple. Through them, a new and alternative way of life will be introduced to mankind. Through them, the dam of blessing that was blocked will break down. What gives us hope at this point is that God chooses and uses even insignificant people like us. You have enough conditions to become a channel of God's blessing. Because you have been invited by God. Abram can do it, but why can't I? The important thing now is whether you accept the new values presented by God and trust, believe, and follow God's word, the promise.

If you, like Abram, have not been separated from your old values and worldview, you are still wandering between chapters 3 and 11 of Genesis, which are repeated aimlessly. Life has a clear purpose. The alternative purpose of life that God presents to us through Abram is a life of blessing. It is a life that others enjoy blessings through me.

God has called you as a seed. He has called you to bear good fruit through you and to have many people pick and eat the fruit. The reason God gives us promises and blessings is that blessings flow to all nations through those blessings. You are the source of blessings and the distributors of blessings. I hope that many fruits will be borne in the lives of those around you and your neighbors through you. I wish you a blessed life in your place of life. I sincerely pray that you will rise above the shadow of the curse and open up a new future opened by God.