Genesis Sermon Series (6)­­­

**“You Will Be a Blessing”**

Genesis 12:1-3, 13:14-18 / January 23, 2022

 **Incredible Promise of God**

 In the Ashburn Korean church, there is a couple that has a five-year-old son. When the child was born, I received a call from the child’s father and rushed to the hospital. The couple had tried to have a child for 10 years, so they became pregnant through artificial insemination. As I headed to the hospital, I thought of that. ‘The birth of a life itself is a very precious thing, but how precious is a child born after 10 years of a difficult process for the couple?

 When I entered the hospital room with such an emotional heart and prayed for the baby who was just born, I remember praying by quoting what God said to Abraham in today’s text. **“Lord, bless those who bless this child, and whoever curses those who curse this child; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through him. Let this child be a blessing!”** I wanted to truly bless the baby, who was born precious.

 But does it mean that another child is not precious? Is it only the baby who was born after 10 years of trying to have a child precious? I don't think so. We are all precious beings. We were all born with noble values when we were born in this world. Each of us was a miracle to our parents and family when we were born. No one is born by chance, and no one is worthless. And the ‘precious value of our existence’ we were born with is our true essence and our genuine identity.

 If the promise of blessing God gave to Abraham in today’s text was only to one man, Abraham, then this word has no meaning for us. But this is a promise to everyone in the world. We call this a ‘promise,’ but it’s actually a ‘declaration,’ and God wants us to remember it. This is because when we live with the identity of being a blessing and valuable being, we can live our lives fully. So, God declares to us. You are the blessings!

 Another important reason why we should have an identity of “we are blessed and precious” is that all the suffering and misery that human beings experience begins with forgetting this identity or not believing in our own preciousness. Psychological and mental problems such as depression, insomnia, panic disorder, anxiety attack, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and addiction that many people experience today are deeply related to the ‘unstable self-awareness,’ in that they do not believe in their own worth. Why don't we believe that we are blessed and precious beings?

 **Obstacles to Believe the Promise**

 People live with goals in life. Some people work hard to make a lot of money, and others study hard to become scholars. Some go through a difficult training process to become a professional, and others leave their countries, their people, and their father’s household with a dream of great success. And people only see their worth when their dreams or goals in life are achieved.

 But the problem arises when the plans we have set for our life goals run into obstacles or fail. The reason Abraham risked everything he had to leave his country, his people, and his father’s house to move to Canaan was because of his life's goal of living in the Promised Land. However, when he arrived in the land of Canaan, believing that it was the promised land, he found that it was not the promised land but the land of famine. Genesis 12:10 describes it very briefly. **“Now there was a famine in the land.”**

 Abraham must have felt great frustration. It is at this point that we do not believe in God’s promises and begin to doubt that we are blessed. We devalue ourselves and begin to feel anxious and depressed. In this uneasy state, we usually doubt God’s promise rather than trust it, and we try to find a way out on our own, relying on our own wisdom rather than God. It was such an act that Abraham went down to Egypt.

 What happened in Egypt after all? To save his life, Abraham told the people that his wife was his sister. He was very timid and cowardly. He tried to forcibly build the Promised Land in Egypt, but he became even more miserable, and was even considered a cause for a terrible disaster, and was eventually expelled from it. He failed again. He would have blamed God. God’s promise of “you will be a blessing” became more and more difficult to believe, and the more he did it, the more his distrust of himself grew, and he must have become more and more depressed.

 There was another obstacle that prevented him from believing in God’s promise. He had a difficult relationship with a person close to him. There is nothing that causes people difficulty, deprives them of their will for life, and lowers their self-esteem as much as a broken relationship. Broken relationships with one’s closest family members affect us more than broken relationships with neighbors, friends, or co-workers. We get hurt the most by broken relationships in our family. We feel our greatest unhappiness when we have problems in close relationships where we expect to be loved, to be respected, and to trust each other, and it is difficult to believe that we are blessed.

 Lot, Abraham’s nephew, whom Abraham had been with since he left his hometown, was a precious family member to Abraham. But Lot was an extremely selfish person who cared about nothing but himself. To Abraham, he was a burden and a troublemaker. As his uncomfortable relationship with Lot continued, Abraham doubted and complained about why God had given him Lot. On the other hand, he must have felt guilty that he could not love his nephew properly as an uncle. He would have thought of himself as a ‘bad being’ rather than a ‘blessed being.’

 Difficulties in human relationships are practical obstacles that keep us from believing in the promise that we are blessed. Through relationships with parents and siblings in childhood, relationships between couples, relationships with neighbors or co-workers, and all kinds of relationships that cannot be avoided every day, we are hurt. Those wounds say to us that we are bad, useless, and unvaluable. They prevent us from loving and trusting ourselves. When our relationships are broken, it's actually very difficult to believe in God's promise that we are blessed. What should we do?

 **Still, Believing the Promise**

 Nevertheless, we must believe in God’s promise. Abraham knew that the land he had arrived at from his hometown was the land of God’s promise, but was disappointed to learn that it was the land of famine. He went to Egypt to make up for that failure, but returned with a bigger failure. When his life was somewhat stable, he had to watch bitterly as his nephew took half of his wealth and left to choose fertile land. Please see what God said to him when he was left in a wasteland of stones and weeds.

 **“The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.” (13:14-16)**

 This was a promise that Abraham could never believe in his situation. The core message of this promise is not the specific content itself, but the ‘declaration of comfort, hope, and blessing’ God gives Abraham. What message is that declaration? It is to believe that we are blessed under any circumstances. Yes. We should not doubt God’s promise that we are blessed even when what we dreamed of comes to nothing, failures continue, and we are hurt by someone from whom we expected love and trust.

 Just because the goal of our lives has not been achieved does not mean that the value of our existence collapses. Even if we fall down and fail again and again, the fact that we are blessed beings does not disappear. Even if we are not loved by people who expect love, are ignored by people who from whom we expected trust, and are constantly hurt in close relationships, the fact that never changes is that we are fundamentally precious and blessed. Even if the failures and wounds you have experienced keep you from believing this, you must believe what God has told you. “You will be a blessing.”

 Finally, there is one thing I want to emphasize. When God said to Abraham, ‘you will be a blessing’, it was not because he met any qualifications or conditions. The Bible shows that God declares blessings upon Abraham without any conditions. We do not have to meet certain qualifications or conditions to become a blessed being. We are precious and blessed in our existence itself. That’s the core of God’s promise. Let's remember. In any situation, we are precious and blessed in our existence itself. Amen!