

“Suffering Leads to Glory”

Mark 8:34-38

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Introduction

Hello everyone.

It's been 8 years since I left the church in 2016. It is nice to be back. Thank you for the invitation to speak today. Personally, I believe that it was truly God's grace and the Lord's presence that allowed me to pastor Market Square Presbyterian Church for 20 years.

What is life for a Christian?

Christians are people who believe that “God is our Creator” Therefore, we live in “God’s providence, God’s will, and God’s plan.”

The Korean congregation used to sing hymn 620 (Gathered here, within this place) a lot during our services and regional gatherings.

Most Korean members call sing it without even looking at the words.

The second stanza is,

*We will live as God has planned, Though at times we may not understand.
Many things we may not see, But our faith will help us believe.*

*From his word we learn the truth
Through His love we all are born a new.
With His help we will not fall For we know our God will prevail.*

“God’s plan, God’s purpose” It exists and directs our lives. “God’s work” toward humans is called “redemptive history” It is the history of human redemption by sending Jesus Christ to us and saving us. This is God's love for us.

Bible Scripture

We Christians are disciples of Jesus.

If I want to be a disciple of Jesus, how should I live?

Jesus speaks to his disciples and says,

“If anyone will come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” (Mark 8:34)

To become a disciple of Jesus, He tells us that “you must first deny yourself.”

Why does he ask you to throw away everything you have: your desires, your pride, and your status?

To carry the cross.

Second, you must take up your cross. The cross is suffering and death.

In the Gospel of Mark, the Jesus that Mark is trying to tell us about is Jesus, the suffering servant.

Emperor Nero of the Roman Empire blamed Christians for the Great Fire in Rome and a great persecution broke out. It was around 64-65 AD. At this time, Peter and Paul were martyred and other Christian martyrs were also killed.

Mark wrote the Gospel with the intention of giving hope and faith when Christians suffer that is participating in the suffering and death on the cross for the glory of God. “Jesus Christ who suffered” emphasizes that he entered into the glory of God as “Jesus Christ of resurrection.”

Exploring

Today’s sermon, “From Suffering to Glory,” conveys that the pain and suffering of the cross is the process leading to the glory of the resurrected Jesus Christ.

What kind of life must one live to become a disciple of Christ?

1. You must deny yourself
 - To bear the cross one must deny oneself.
 - Paul, who accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior and became a “witness of the resurrection,” declares:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.
(Galatians 2:20)

- Christ becomes the master within us. When people are in trouble and want to solve a problem, they turn to experts. But Christians must ask the Lord first. Christians must pray. We must follow the solution the Lord gives us.

2. You must take up your cross

What does your cross mean?

The cross of Jesus is the door to human salvation within “God’s providence and plan” in God’s redemptive work. It can be said to be the climax of the history of redemption.

“One’s cross,” which Jesus spoke of, that is, the cross we must bear, can be said to be the door to participate in God’s work of redemption. Only by passing through this door can we participate in the glory of God.

Some people say that it is their cross to bear when something is difficult, unfair, unjustly criticized or failures in their life. This is a worldly idea. There is a deeper, more positive meaning in Jesus’ command of “carry your cross”.

Suffering is the cross. And suffering and glory are one word that is connected.

During World War II in 1944, an 18-year-old German young man was conscripted by the Nazi regime and deployed to the Western Front. The innocent young man saw the atrocities of war with many dying in the fierce battle. He was worried about this situation and thought to himself, “If I don’t kill the other person, I will be killed.” During the war, he became a prisoner of the British army and was held in a camp for three years. A British army chaplain delivered the Bible to him. He tried to answer the question, “What is the meaning of life?” The young man, who originally planned to major in mathematics and physics, returned to Germany after the war and studied theology, becoming a famous theologian. His name is Jurgen Moltmann and the focus of his theology is “the theology of hope,” which is “the resurrected Jesus Christ who overcame death.”

What is the ultimate life of a Christian?

Following the Christian life. It is a life in which we bear the cross of suffering that Jesus Christ bore and suffered for us.

We Christians are people who live with the hope that suffering will lead to glory.

What is hope?

Worldly hope is “a better expectation for the future to come.” The better events that will happen to me will be fortune, wealth, and status.

That's not what hope is for Christians.

Earlier, I said that we Christians are people who live within “God’s plan” and “God’s providence.”

Paul Tillich said we live in two orders.

We are “citizens of the United States” on this earth and citizens of the “Kingdom of God.”

For Christians, “hope is waiting for God’s covenant” and “God’s promise.”

No matter what suffering or hardships we face, we can overcome it by believing and being confident in the promise and covenant given by the Lord and believing that it is the cross given to me.

Conclusion

Market Square Presbyterian Church was established about 250 years ago as a witness to the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

The Korean ministry established within this church has been fulfilling the mission given by the Lord to spread the gospel for 50 years.

I truly thank you for the grace of God and for bearing the cross you bore.

There are not many churches in the United States where Americans and Koreans share the Lord's love and share the Lord's love together at the same table.

Please share God's Love with One Another

The word given by the Lord is, “love one another as I have loved you.” It is not about giving my love, but about giving and receiving the love of the Lord that the Lord has given us.

There are no whites, blacks, Asians, Americans or Koreans in the “Kingdom of God” There are only “children of God.”

I pray that the Lord’s grace and peace will come to Market Square Presbyterian Church and all its members.

Amen

Thank you so much.