

Romans 15:14-33 “The Gospel of Christ”

Introduction:

Today is Palm Sunday. It is a day when the Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem as a king, and the people welcomed him by waving palm branches. At Grace City, it is customary for the children to lead the Palm Sunday service by singing praises. However, due to a corona infection, we were not able to do that this year. It is very sad.

Also, from today is Holy Week, the week of the Passion. As we reflect on the death of Jesus on the cross, we begin the week of preparation for Easter, the celebration of the resurrection. Next week, on Easter Sunday, we will have our first service in 13 months at KDDI Hall. If you can make it, please come. Of course, some of you may not want to take the risk, so we will be offering an online service as usual from 3:30 pm.

We will also have a time for children during the Easter service, so please join us with your family. During the week, let's listen to the Word and be led by the Holy Spirit to contemplate the death of Jesus on the cross. Please take advantage of the Lent Prayers on Grace City's Facebook page. There will also be a Passion Day Service on Friday (4/2).

My brothers and sisters, if this is how Jesus came to the cross, gave His life, rose from the dead and is alive, how do we respond? We are to share the gospel of Jesus, who brought salvation through His death and resurrection on the cross, to all people. Let us renew our vision for our lives through Paul's vision and mission as he writes in Romans.

Romans 15:14-33

¹⁴I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. ¹⁵But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. ¹⁸For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; ²⁰and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, ²¹but as it is written,

“Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand.”

²²This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, ²⁴I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. ²⁵At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

³⁰I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³²so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. ³³May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

First, Paul articulates his missionary vision. This is a vision that should be shared by all Christians, not just Israel, but all people who will worship God. Secondly, Paul reveals his evangelistic plan to go through Rome and into Spain. With that, let us think about our mission and ministry.

Thirdly, he calls for prayer as the driving force of all things, for all things come from God and can only be carried out by the power of God. The vision of missions, the work and plan of the gospel, and the power of prayer.

1. Vision of missions

In today's message, I want to focus on the missionary vision of spreading the gospel throughout the world. Not only the Jews but also the Gentiles will be blessed by God. And they will be filled with true joy. In this way, the kingdom of God will come and the glory of Christ will be revealed!

The first thing that is important for this is what is said in verses 14-15. "I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge, and competent to instruct one another. Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ to the Gentiles."

This means that the Christians of the Roman Church will be filled with the fullness of the gospel, that their hearts will be transformed and filled with goodness, that they will be filled with all knowledge of God's redemptive plan, that they will be mature in love for their neighbors, that they will be able to teach one another to put each other's needs before their own, and that they will live in hope.

There were some problems among the Christians in Rome, weren't there? In particular, there were quarrels over food regulations and observance of holidays. However, if we forgive, accept, love and reconcile with each other through the gospel, we can show the value of the gospel, can't we?

That is why Grace City also describes its identity as follows: "Grace City is a gospel-centered community." We don't want this to be just a drawing board. We confess our weaknesses in order to accept and forgive one another. We need to confess our sins, be pricked by our neighbor's words of warning, and repent. Our pain will be healed because of the gospel of Jesus' forgiveness and God's comfort. It will result in joy.

Listen, even today many people are skeptical of the Christian message of love. This is because the church is divided into Catholics and Protestants, and denominations sprout and divide, claiming that they are the right ones. Unfortunately, the dynamic reality of the gospel, where Christians truly forgive and love each other, and accept each other's differences, cannot be found in our personal lives or in our churches.

First of all, we ourselves must be "full of good will, filled with all knowledge, admonishing one another," so that the grace of God may overflow and the gospel of Christ may be preached everywhere. This is what Paul said in verses 15 and 16. ". . . because of the grace God gave me . . ." "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

Let us also make Paul's vision our own. In chapter 12 verse 1 he said, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God." Paul extends this beautiful advice to the Gentiles. He is dreaming of the whole world "becoming an offering holy and pleasing to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." This is God's plan. This is God's dream.

I did kintsugi at the "Aroma of Beauty" art festival recently. I found a broken and cracked teacup that leaked when filled with hot water, making it unusable. There were many chips on the edge of the drinking vessel, and it was not pretty. However, since it was given to me by my son and his wife who are now divorced, I couldn't throw it away and kept it in the back of the tea chest.

The chipped areas are repaired with lacquer, and when the lacquer is dry and hard, it is polished until it becomes smooth. Then I cover it with gold. (Of course, it is not pure gold; it would be too expensive, so they use golden brass.) Gold is also added to the cracks to create a beautiful shape. The key to adding gold is to draw slowly and carefully in a thin, thin line. The result is not bad. It is actually beautiful. The golden cracks look like "Jacob's ladder" hanging from heaven to earth.

Grace City says, "Our vision is for Tokyo to be filled with God's grace through the making of disciples of Christ." That's how we put it. Our vision is that God will serve like a goldsmith, healing the broken hearts of people through Christ. It is God's work of repairing chipped and cracked lives with the gospel of grace. A disciple of Christ is a person who has been healed by the gospel.

Hearts, lives, communities, and societies that are healed by Christ and remade by the gospel are more beautiful than ever. This is the vision of missions. How wonderful it would be if Tokyo could be filled with such divine beauty and the gospel movement could spread throughout the world.

2. Gospel work and plans

It is believed that Paul wrote Romans during his third missionary journey, when he stayed in Corinth for three months (AD 57-58). Paul had already preached the gospel quite extensively.

It seems to have had an influence from what is now northern Palestine to Syria, to the major cities of Asia Minor, especially Turkey, and across the sea to Greece and Macedonia in Europe, as well as Albania on the Adriatic. He writes, "I began in Jerusalem and went all the way to Illyricum, preaching the gospel of Christ. (verse 19).

When we say "spread the gospel throughout" and "there is no more room for me to work in this region," we are not referring to every town and village. He meant that he had taken the gospel to almost all of the major cities in each region. If you look at the Acts of the Apostles, which records the footsteps of Paul's ministry, you will see that he made it his missionary policy to preach the gospel to the major cities in each region and to build up the church (the community of God's people).

He thought that by doing so, the gospel would be preached far and wide, even in the towns and villages around the city. In this way, he hoped to "preach the gospel to the places where the name of Christ has not yet been spoken" (v. 20).

Isn't this what we all want? "Those who have not been told about him will see him, and those who have not heard about him will understand." (v.21) In order for this to happen, it needs to be spread geographically. (v.21) In order to do this, we need to be spread out geographically, finding places where the gospel has not been preached and carrying it with us.

However, it is not just a matter of location. As the old saying goes, "Different places, different products." Depending on the place or region, the language, customs, manners, culture, lifestyle, and the way of building relationships are all different. So Paul writes,

1 Corinthians 9:19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I became a slave to all, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew... to those who are under the law I became like one who is under the law... 21 To those who do not have the law I became like one who does not have the law. ...22 To those who were weak, he became weak... to all, he became all things. ... so that by all possible means, he might save some."

Thus, for all to hear the gospel, we need to be passionately humble, broken-hearted, and loving (contextualized) like Paul. Immerse yourself in the passionate, sacrificial love of Christ who came for your needs (i.e. salvation), humbled Himself, took up His cross, and gave all for you. For Christ is the First Person who became all things to all people. I want you to be baptized again today in the love of Jesus, who has overcome the high and thick wall between God and man.

However, Paul always evangelized as a team. He didn't do it all by himself. It seems that he intentionally brought together people with different gifts and abilities. They included Barnabas, a man of love and mercy; John Mark, a young man; Silas, a Jew; Luke, a physician and historian; Timothy, whose father was a Greek; and Aquila and Priscilla, a tent-making couple.

My brothers and sisters, we are already a Grace City Mission Team. Your gifts, abilities, and past experiences will be used. Please be generous. Let's use your time, effort, money, and talents generously for God's mission plan.

Paul also collected donations among the Gentiles to help with the famine in Jerusalem. By doing so, he tried to show the unity and cooperation between Jews and Gentiles, and the richness of God's family by bringing the poor and the strong together. Grace City also has a bento project, but this is not just

about helping the poor. It is to serve God's redemptive plan, to create unity and cooperation, and to serve the mission of God's kingdom. Again, please recall the mission of Grace City's ministry.

Our mission is to bring the gospel movement from Tokyo to the world through faithful biblical teaching and worship, transforming lives, helping to restore communities, contributing to cultural renewal, and responding to social pain.

3.The Power of Prayer

This vision of mission and the work of the gospel is possible only through the power of Christ's grace and prayer. Paul introduces his own ministry of going to Rome and then to Spain for missionary work. He tells us that his motivation was "because of the grace that God has given me" (verse 15).

As for his own identity, he is humble when he writes that he is "a servant of Christ Jesus" (v.16). Furthermore, he wrote, "I am fulfilling the ministry of a priest with the gospel of God" (v.16), because he knows that only God can save, and he knows his role is to serve in that ministry. Finally, "the Gentiles, through the Holy Spirit," become holy offerings, but not because of Paul's power or achievements. This is not by Paul's power or achievements, but only by the Holy Spirit's work.

"Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. (v.17). It is not a pride in our own works and achievements. It is a victory won in the loincloth of Christ, so to speak. We cannot win salvation and expand our ministry by our own strength and achievements. If we tried to do so, we would be crushed by the sheer size of the mission. However, because of Christ, we can have joy, pride, and confidence.

Many people are often hesitant to reveal to those around them (at work, for example) that they are Christians and share the gospel of Christ with them. This is because they are a minority in an overwhelmingly non-Christian society. This is only because being a Christian has long been viewed negatively and persecuted in Japanese history since the 17th century.

But now it is time to free ourselves from this bondage and negative mentality. Even if we have to suffer, Jesus suffered for us, not for Himself, and even gave His life on the cross. Jesus is risen, alive, and with you. The Holy Spirit is working inside you to encourage you to confess Jesus as Lord.

But you don't have to blindly say you are a Christian. It's not a good idea to call out the words of the Bible like a broken speaker when your friends won't listen. A random example is, "Did you move on Sunday? By asking, "Did you move on Sunday?" it may lead naturally to talking about being a Christian and worshipping.

Everyone experiences difficulties and worries, so it is natural to talk to your friends about how your faith can help you in these times. Tell your story of how asking Jesus to help you and reading the Bible can encourage and give you wisdom. We all love to gossip. They will listen to your story too. Your story is a fact, and no one can deny it.

Please pray for each other. Pray for the vision of missions, that you may serve in the work of the gospel. Even Paul asks for prayer.

15:30 Brethren. I ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, and through the love of the Spirit. Pray to God with all your might for me and with me.

Let's pray and ask God, because He is the only one who can accomplish salvation and accomplish the wonderful plan of redemption. God will do what is best!