

Sermon of 3-11-18, Young Rhyon Kim

The Life-giving Church

West Valley Presbyterian Church

Passage: Ezekiel 47:1-12

Intro:

I would like to thank Reverend Kim and you for giving me this opportunity to speak. I am truly thankful for your generous heart that accepted us to worship in this beautiful place when we were searching for a place to worship after the departure from PCUSA.

You don't just have a label "Christian." But you are practicing Christians who shows love. It is not an easy thing to share the place with someone else. But you accepted us as a brother in Christ, and also as a partnership church who has a different language and a culture. We are truly thankful for you, because West Valley church has a heart of Christ.

Today, I want to look at Ezekiel 47 to think about the role church has to play in the world.

Main body:

Prophet Ezekiel

Around 570 BC, Ezekiel who was Israel's priest and prophet sees a vision. At that time, Israel fell to Babylon and he was also taken as a captive to Babylon.

On one day, the hand of God took Ezekiel back to Israel and set him on a very high mountain (in a vision). There he sees a city (Ezek. 40:1-2). He sees a man whose appearance was like bronze and who had a measuring rod in his hand. But, he was actually an angel sent from God (Ezek. 40:3). The angel shows a heavenly temple that is not built by men to Ezekiel. The angel tells him to witness what he saw (Ezek. 40:4). Ezekiel sees the temple of God with the angel and comes to

Ezekiel 47 at last. The angel takes Ezekiel to the entrance of the temple. The passage shows what he saw.

Verse 1: The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar.

Verse 2: He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side.

In these verses, "he" refers to the angel. He was a tour guide sent to show God's temple to Ezekiel. When they came back to the entrance of the temple after seeing different parts of the temple, water was coming out from under the threshold of the temple. Water from the temple first came out from the temple's threshold. Then the water flew through the outer court to the outer gate.

Measuring angel

Verse 3: As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep.

Verse 4: He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist.

Ezekiel and the angel started from temple's outer gate and headed toward the east. As they got further away from the temple, the amount of water increased and was becoming a bigger stream of water. The angel had a measuring cord. The angel measured 1000 cubit from the entrance of the temple and led Ezekiel into the water. 1 cubit is about 18 -22inches. It's about 500 yards. The water got deeper in every 500 yards. At first, the water was ankle-deep. After another 500 yards, the water was knee-deep. After another 500 yards, the water was up to the waist.

Imagine this. What happens when the water gets deeper? There is a greater resistance. When the water is about ankle-deep, I could run. When it's knee-deep, it's hard to walk in fast pace. When it gets waist-deep, it becomes harder. As the amount of water increase, my body becomes slower.

Submerged Ezekiel

Verse 5: He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross.

The water got really deep after another 500 yards. Ezekiel's body was submerged in the river. Now, he could not touch the bottom of the river. He could cross the river only by swimming. In one sense, it became easier. He did not have to walk with resistance when the water was up to the knee or the waist. He could rely his body to the flow of the water and swim to cross the river. There is more freedom.

Symbolic meaning

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, it is hard to live out the faith when you try to do it by your strength. The water coming out from the temple represents the grace of God and the Holy Spirit. It represents the Word of God. What could come out from the temple of God? It's the grace of God for us. When you do not rely on the grace of God and try to do things by your strength, you can do things according to your will when there is less grace. But when there is a greater grace, you will find out that you cannot do things by your strength. We can do things when we entrust yourself to the grace of God. That's the difference between "the Holy Spirit lording over me" and "me trying to lord over the Holy Spirit."

When I am the lord of my life, it seems easier to live a Christian life, church life, and ministries. But I receive the glory, not Christ and we end up doing "self-centered" services and ministries. When I die to myself and the grace of God takes a control over me, I could live a Holy Spirit-centered life instead of self-centered life.

Ezekiel's vision doesn't finish here.

Each side of the river

Verse 6: He asked me, "Son of man, do you see this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river.

Verse 7: T When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river.

The angel asks Ezekiel, "Do you see this?" It's implying that the angel really wants Ezekiel to see this.

This time, the angel led him back to the bank of the river. Now there was a great amount of water that it became a river.

Plus, there was a great number of trees on both side of the river. It's a matter of course. The tree needs water to grow. Trees are growing, because the river supplies the water.

Water that revives Dead Sea

Verse 8: He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh.

Verse 9: Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.

In these 2 verses, we see that the river flows east to the place called Arabah. Arabah is in eastern region of Israel. The Jordan River flows down to the Dead Sea through the Jordan Valley. That Jordan Valley is called Arabah. The Dead Sea is in Arabah.

Arabah and Dead Sea

The Dead Sea has a very low elevation. It is 1412 feet (430m) below the sea level. It has the lowest elevation on earth. It has the salinity of 34.2%. Nothing can live in it. That's why it's called the Dead Sea.

But when the river from the temple enter the Dead Sea, it is revived. It's an amazing miracle! What seems to be impossible to be restored receives a life! That's not all.

Restored Dead Sea

Verse 10: Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea.

The Dead Sea could not have any fish in the past. But since the water is restored, fishermen place their nets in the lake and they are able to catch many. It's a great turnaround. Life overflows in a place where there was no life in the past.

Unrestored region

Verse 11: But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.

Most parts of the lake is restored. But there are parts that remain not restored. They are swamps and marshes. These places were covered with the salt water for a long time that even the fresh water could not bring a restoration.

It shows that if we continue to sin without repentance, our life might not be restored even if the grace of God flows into our lives.

Origin of fresh water

Then where does the fresh water come from? Let's look at verse 12.

Verse 12: Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the

sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.

The water comes from the sanctuary. The sanctuary is the most inner part of the temple of God. It is where the presence of God is. There are lampstand and table of showbread in the Holy Place and the Ark of the Covenant is in the Most Holy Place. Both places are part of the sanctuary and it is the place where the God of Israel resides. A great amount of water flowed from this sanctuary. This water first flowed under the threshold of temple. Then it passed through the outer gate. It flowed eastward and it finally flowed into the Dead Sea which is called Arabah. Through the vision, God showed what happened from the temple of God. Using water as a symbol, it showed that the grace of God flows like a river from the sanctuary.

Fruit trees planted by the river

This water forms a great river and many trees grows from both side of the river. These trees bear fruits. Leaves never wither and these trees bear fruits continuously. These fruits are for food and leaves are for healing.

This vision is also mentioned in the very last part of New Testament. This time, the person who sees the vision is John the Apostle.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:1-2)

The Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden appears again in this place. This tree is planted by the water that came out of the sanctuary.

Christians planted by the water of life

The book of Ezekiel says that the fruits are for food and leaves for healing. These trees refer to Christians who are planted by the water of life. Christians who are planted by the water of God's Word grow to be a healthy tree. They will be produce fruits and leaves which are used for food and healing. Psalm 1 writes that the blessed and righteous are like a tree planted by streams of water.

Mission of church: Give life

I believe that this vision is the symbol for the church, the body of Christ on the earth. When we worship together in the church, the invisible heavenly sanctuary is opened. That sanctuary is the God who receives our worship. When we worship God, he receives our worship and he gives us the Word, sends us the Holy Spirit and pours his grace upon us. The Word preaches from this pulpit is like a living water. This living water restores our heart that is like the Dead Sea. It restores our family. It restores our society and the world. Broken heart, broken family, dysfunctional society and the world seem impossible to be restored. But they will be restored by the grace of God that flows like a river. This river comes out of sanctuary which is the church. Therefore our church is the tunnel that gives a life to the world.

Conclusion:

When West Valley and Onnuri Church worship and lift the name of God in unity, even if we cannot see with our eyes, the throne of God will be opened, and I believe that God will pour the river of water, river of grace and the river of Holy Spirit from his throne. By this river, we will be like trees planted by the stream that bear fruits in its season and our leaves will never wither.

Our mission is to bring back the life to the world. It is to give a life to the world. The purpose of our church is to give the life to the world. We believe when West Valley and Onnuri Church become a faithful servant to this mission, Cupertino area will have a life. Silicon Valley will have a life. The life and the grace of God will flow into this nation and nations around the world. We pray that these things will happen through these churches. Amen.