



**November 26, 2006**

Preaching: Rev. Eunbae Doh

2 Samuel 23:1-7

## “Sun and Thorn”

The scripture we read this morning has been called David's last word. But it does not mean that it is his last word in his life like someone's will, testament, and dying wish. This scripture is the last oracle and a song he wrote inspired by God.

But this is quite different from other songs which he left, because it was written in his last years. It seems like a summarization of his life as a King of Israel. It seems like an epitaph, an inscription on a tombstone that tells how people lived. Some epitaph record achievements, but nearly all note names, date of birth and date of death. A good epitaph is considered to be one that is memorable, or at least makes one think.

I want to share with you some famous epitaphs.

**hodie mihi, cras tibi: Famous latin epitaph, mine today, yours tomorrow**

**Here lies one of the most intelligent animals who ever appeared on the face of the earth: Benito Mussolini (Hmm, I don't agree with him except the word animal)**

**Never Born, Never Died-Only visited this planet Earth: Osho Rajneesh, An Indian spiritual leader (Well, might be, but not just visited but left more than hundred Rolls-Royces and countless desperate followers)**

**I hope for nothing. I fear nothing. I am free: Nikos Kazantzakis, great Greek writer and philosopher. (I love him and his novels.)**

**And the last one is from China, from a father on his son's tombstone.**

**“He went too far in the search of flowers.” What a great epitaph!! I've never seen such a great one which sublimated such a human tragedy into art.**

What if you are going to leave something on your tombstone which tells who you were, how you lived, what kinds of inscriptions will you leave there?

To me, I have no idea. But I think, I want to copy that one from the Chinese father, my version would read, "He went too far in the search of God."

Let's see what David says. He described two different types of lives.

The first one is a life like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the brightness after rain. Can you imagine that scene? How do you feel? That gives us a great feeling. How can you identify your feeling? What kind of words come up in your mind? Life, renewal, vitality, and restoration... He is telling us a life that gives others renewal, hope, joy, and vitality like morning sun and brightness. This is the life that David was trying to live and we have to follow. We can say that it is a life for others.

How can we live that kind of blessed life giving blessing to others? David summarized the key factors, and main characteristics, that is, FEAR OF GOD and JUSTICE. What is the fear of God? It is not a kind of feeling of fear, fright, and horror but awe; reverence; veneration. It is a knowing God and awareness of God's existence. We can call The Fear of God Christian piety. The other one which help us to live a life for others like morning sun and rain is justice. Justice can not be separated from Fear of God because justice is an outcome and result of the fear of God. If God does not exist in our heart, we cannot live a life of justice. Or we don't have to live like that. God is imperatively required for the justice of human life.

Why do we need to live the life of justice and fear of God? The reason is that we know who God is, what God want us to do. God want us to live in justice and fear of God. God want us to live for others. Bible tells us how to live in fear of God through the story of Moses, Abraham, and many other people. God showed us how to live for others through his son, Jesus Christ who died for us to save us.

There is a person I have known for a long time. He has been a long time lay leader of Korean Methodist Church. He was a Sunday school teacher of a church I attended as a high school student. He was a professor and became a president of one of the big universities in Korea. He had achieved everything people desire, a great job, beautiful family, and honor. He was a good Christian and respectful person. Everybody loved him. Everybody wanted to live a life like him.

A Few years ago, I met him again at some Christian event in Chicago. It was 20 years after we met. I was so glad and happy. But It did not take a long time until I realized that something happened to him. He was not the person I knew. Something had changed. Of course he had aged visibly. But he looked poor and shabby.

I said, "How are you?" He said, "I'm fine." I asked "What do you do? Where do you live now?" He said, "I'm in Mongolia. I am raising money to fund a university in Mongolia." I was surprised and said, "Mongolia? not Korea?" And He told me why he was there, what he did there.

At the age of 60, he heard a voice from inside. At that time he was teaching at a university in Korea. The inner voice was saying to him, what are you doing here, if you go to Heaven, meet God, and God asked you, "What did you do?" What can you say? He realized He hadn't done anything to please God, even though he served a Church for long time and taught children at Sunday School.

Finally, he decided to live the rest of his life for God. While he was searching where he would go to serve God, he met a missionary from Mongolia. He was encouraged to build a university for the young generation in Mongolia to bring them to Jesus Christ. He went there to start his mission. But he was faced with many problems, financially, physically, even politically. But he experienced many miracles while he was building the School. Now, the school became one of the best universities and most popular institutes of technology in Mongolia. When I met him in Chicago, I met him, he was doing fund raising to provide scholarship for more students.

Isn't his life beautiful as David described? This is a life for others. This is a life like morning sun and brightness to give life and hope to others. I believe that our world is not sustained by politicians, armies, and scientists but the people who are willing to give of themselves to others in justice and fear of God. They are the life, hope, and true remnant of Israel in this world.

By the way, David tells us about another life, the life of the thorn. There are several features of the thorn. It gives others pain. There are many methods to give others pain. The way we deploy is through the misuse of our tongue. We experience the bitterness of someone's tongue every day in our life.

Here is a story from the book "All I really need to know I learned in Kindergarten, by Robert Fulghum,

**In the Solomon Island in the South Pacific some villagers practice a unique form of logging. If a tree is too large to be felled with an ax, the native cut it down by yelling at it. They Woodsmen creep up on a tree and suddenly scream at it at the top of their lungs. They continue this for thirty days. The tree dies and falls over. The theory is that hollering kills the spirit of the tree. According to the villagers, it always works. Yelling at living things does tend to kill the spirit in them. Stick and stones may break our bones, but words will break our heart.**

How many times did you yell at your husband and wife? How often do you yell at your children? How are you yelling at the sky? How many times do you kill others with your tongue like thorn?

And a second feature of the thorn is that it is difficult to touch, carry, and handle. David said,

**Verse 6: "for they cannot be picked up with the hand; to touch them one uses an iron bar or the shaft of a spear."**

A thorn is like resistance to talking with and having contact with others. There are people who are hard to get close to do not want to be touched or to be around others. They live in loneliness and separation.

The last feature of the thorn is uselessness. The thorn has no use unless some bad guys pick up that to hurt others. Or God can use it for something special purpose. Yes God has taken a thorn to put on his son's head. Do you really want to be used like that?

What is the final destination of the life of a thorn?

**Verse 7: They are burned up where they lie**

This is the reality of the life without God, -living in injustice, living in loneliness, never giving anyone any hope, any joy.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, think about who you are, how you live, what kind of life you are living. What word will you leave on your tombstone?