



**December 28, 2008**

Preaching: Rev. Eunbae Doh

## “Living on a Promise”

As many of us know, there are twelve days of Christmas and the season of Christmas continues today. So when you see each other today, let's say to one another, “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.”

Today is the last Sunday of this year. This is the time of self reflection. Most of us may think over what we have done, what we have not done this year. Last week, I was invited to a Christmas party, a gathering of pastors and pastors' families. We had some time to share each other about what are the memorable things in our life in this year. I couldn't share anything special. So when I got back home, I tried to create my top ten lists to reflect my life in 2008.

Do you want to hear that? Whether you want or not I will tell you anyway. But I'm not going to share with you all of them to save time. I want introduce to you the top five among them.

Number 5, in 2008, I conducted the first wedding and the first funeral of my life.

Number 4, I went to Disney World in Florida and was fascinated by a big castle known as the Magic Kingdom. Not because of its size and architecture but the lighting system making the castle fantastic. And I realized that our church building really needs that kind of thing.

Number 3, I failed to increase in weight. But I will try again next year.

Number 2, it became clear that Joshua is really my son. When I was at a big shopping mall, I lost him. Someone came to me and asked, "Are you looking for your son?" I said, "Yes." She said "He is over there." I wondered how she knew he was my son. She said, "He is exactly like you."

Number 1, I was confirmed in my belief that I am really happy when I stand on the pulpit.

What do you have on your top ten lists as you reflect yourself this year?

These days of Christmas call us to celebrate, to re-order and perhaps re-frame our lives so that we can live differently. The Bible story given today is a great example of that, How to live. In this story there are two people, an old man and woman named Simeon and Anne. Their story shows us the way.

Mary and Joseph went to the temple to present their son, Jesus, to God. It was the Law; every first born male shall be designated as Holy to the Lord. At the temple, they met Simeon and Anne.

Simeon was a man upon whom the Holy Spirit "rested". Because of God's promise to him, he had expected to live at least long enough to see the Messiah. The prophetic words he spoke over the infant "previewed" the way that Jesus' life and death would have an impact on both Jews and Gentiles.

Anne was also described as a prophet who worshipped at the temple, with fasting and prayer, night and day. She was an 84-year-old widow who had only lived with her husband for seven years before his death. When Anne saw the holy infant, she also began to speak prophetically about the redemption they were looking forward to experiencing.

They have been waiting Messiah for a long time probably their entire life. Finally, the day has come. That was the highest moment of their life that their life long wish has been fulfilled. We can imagine how they felt in that moment through Simeon's saying.

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in Peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation”.

Lord, you kept the promise. Now I can die. There is nothing more I want. I’m ready to go.

What can we say about these old people? How can we identify their life? I want to say that it was the life on a promise. They have lived in a hope and promise and finally they became witnesses of the fulfillment of their hope and promise.

I may not have read Barack Obama's book "The Audacity of Hope". But I believe that Simeon and Anne’s life show us what the audacity of hope means to us.

They had lived on the promised and died in the promise.

But not everyone can do that.

Here is an example of the people who stumbled and could not stand on a promise. They were God’s chosen people.

Let’s take a look the Old Testament, Exodus 6:2-9

God also spoke to Moses and said to him: *‘I am the Lord. <sup>3</sup>I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. <sup>4</sup>I established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. <sup>5</sup>I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. <sup>6</sup>Say therefore to the Israelites, “I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. <sup>7</sup>I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.”*’` Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery.

God called Moses and remind him he made a covenant with their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God remembered the covenant he made long time ago almost 500 years ago. Now he wanted to keep the covenant.

He said, I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

So, Moses told this to the Israelites. But they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery.

Wow, what a strange story. God gave a great covenant to their ancestors and wanted to keep the promise. They are going to be free and will get their land. But they did not want it!! We don't need that. Just get out of here!!

The Bible explained why they did not listen. There were two reasons: their broken spirit and cruel slavery. We can understand what cruel slavery means. But you may be wondered about the meaning of the word, broken spirit.

In other Bible versions it is translated as “discouragement” (New International Version) or “anguish of spirit” (King James Version). But as we look the word in Hebrew, we can catch the meaning more vividly. In Hebrew, it means “shortness of breath” It shows us their spiritual situation. Breathing in and breathing out, breathing is an imperative part of our life. They were choking. They were out of breathing like a dying person. Their spirit was dying. How had that happened?

A long time before, they had a great time in Egypt. They were good friends of Pharaoh, but the situation had changed. They became slaves. They were struggling from the hard work and cruel bondage. After so many years of affliction, they had lost any hope and could believe any great promise given to their ancestors.

As I wrote this sermon, I found out this would be our story, the situation we have been facing this year 2008. Yes, we, the United States, have had a great time. But the situation has been changed. For some reason, we are experiencing serious financial crisis and collapsing of our economic foundation. We are losing breath, we are losing hope.

There are many of us as God's children today, who are struggling to hear and receive God's promises in this economic situation. For many of us "Egypt" and "Slavery" are certain and true. Sure, we have read what is written in the Bible, all the great promises, the story of redemption and the message of comfort. We know the teachings of Bible encouraging us to stand strong on God's promise.

But all the words and promises can seem very distant and elusive to us as we struggle with the realities of our life. The Pharaoh of this world is breaking our spirit and crushing the hope we have been given by faith in God.

When you weary, when you are losing all the foundations which you stand on, when your heart and soul are broken, think about these man and women, Simeon and Anna who lived on a promise and ended their life in the fulfillment of promise.

Our Lord tells us in Matthew 24:12 that ***"because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved"***.

Remember, God always keeps His promises and He always remembers His covenants with His people. We who have trusted in Him will see the dawning of the day when Messiah reigns on earth and all tears are wiped away. We *will* enter into the Promised Land and live forever with Him. No matter what happens in the days ahead...no matter how bad things appear...keep looking up. Stand on a promise.