

## **Walking the Way with the Holy Spirit**

Good morning everyone, how is your summer going? I think some people are enjoying the last long weekend of this summer. Some of you already came back from your vacation and preparing to go back to your daily lives. Today is the last summer worship service. As we wrap up this summer, I would like to invite you to have a brief time of meditation before I begin my sermon. Are you okay with that? Then, why don't we start? Simply follow my instruction. You may close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so. You may take a deep breath. Breathe in and breathe out. One more time, breathe in and breathe out. Slowly look back through this summer, June, July, August. You may reflect on your summer and ask yourself, "when did I feel the presence of the Holy Spirit?" Can you pick a particular moment that you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit? Where were you? When was it? With whom were you? What were you doing? How did you sense the Spirit? Was it like a strong wind or a gentle breeze? Was it changing your emotion or leading you to a rational understanding? Stay at that moment. If you cannot pick one particular memory, it is fine. Let's take another deep breath. Breathe in and breathe out. Breathe in and breathe out. You may gently open your eyes when you are ready.

Thank you for your participation. I have one more request. Would you mind finding one person beside you and share when you felt the Holy Spirit this summer? Please, don't feel pressured to share it. If you don't want to share, you can simply listen. We will have one or two minutes per each person.

Thank you so much for your participation. Since I have a privilege to speak today, I will share the moment I felt the Holy Spirit this Summer. I mostly stayed in Toronto during the summer. God gave me a chance to share the word of God in several places. Especially, I enjoyed the weekly bible study group at U of T with a few undergraduate Korean-Canadian students. I really missed them while I was in Boston. I was very passionate to have that gathering again. I don't know why, but I chose the Gospel of John

and decided to study it with the students. After two meetings, I realized that I made a mistake. My smart and curious students were throwing all difficult questions about the Gospel of John as we read it together. Every week, I felt pressure to study hard before I go to the gathering. I read famous commentaries like N.T Wright. At times I was nervous and thought, “what if they abandon their faith because of my wrong answers? What if I fail to explain the beauty of the Gospel to them?” One day, I was preparing for John chapter 3. A Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews came to Jesus by night. I imagine that he might have a lot of difficult questions as he visited Jesus. Jesus said to him. “No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” “What do you mean by that?” Nicodemus asked. Jesus said, “being above means being born of water and Spirit.” It seems like this smart guy did not understand the meaning of it and somehow I felt relieved. Then, I felt that, “this is the work of the Holy Spirit and not mine.” I am not saying that I don’t need to study the bible or have a bible study group anymore because the Holy Spirit will do everything. My point is that I had to admit that the Holy Spirit is the one who begins and accomplishes the work of God. I was able to lay down my burden of persuading smart students to believe in Jesus, and pray, “Lord, pour us the Holy Spirit. I share your word with my limited knowledge and weakness, but the Holy Spirit is the one who guides our faith.” It was a gentle but strong touch of the Holy Spirit to me.

As I prepare for today’s sermon, I meditated on the theme of this summer, which is “On the Way: views from our faith journey.” I looked back my faith journey: My first church memories in my childhood, the first time that I felt the love of God when I was a middle schooler, the first time that I confessed that I want to believe in Jesus, the moment I got baptized, spiritual retreats in Korea, mission trips in Asian countries, spiritual wilderness during my seminary years, encountering Mennonite faith, and having fellowship with people of diverse cultural backgrounds. After pondering on them, I had two thoughts. First, I was very grateful that God has guided and led my faith journey. Now I can enjoy the larger body of Christ with sisters and brothers who have different cultural and spiritual backgrounds. Secondly, I felt a little bit of homesick. I missed the

church building that I went to every Sunday when I lived in Korea. I missed the Korean hymns that we sang together and the Korean style prayer time, which has a unique and communal way of experiencing the Holy Spirit. I also missed conversations about how the Holy Spirit worked in our lives.

Anthropologists and theologians who studied Korean culture often say that Koreans share a certain type of emotion, which is called *han*. The word is not easily translated into English. One scholar described it as “a sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels.” Another scholar said that it is a kind of unfulfilled wishes and desires. As Koreans experienced foreign invasions, colonialism, war, and poverty throughout their history, this particular emotion was shared in the Korean community and passed down to generations. The word *han* is still commonly used nowadays. For example, my great aunt who is now in her 80s could not get a proper education when she was a little kid because she was raised in a strong patriarchal family and her dad believed women do not need education. So, she has a *han* of education. During the time of Japanese colonialism, young women were taken to war zones as sex slaves for the Japanese imperial army. People estimate the number of those Korean women were about 100,000. Currently, there are only 20 people who are alive. There might be more of them, but when they came back to Korea after liberation, they felt deep shame to share their experiences and kept silent. 46 years after the end of the colonialism, in the year 1991, one woman publicly shared her story of victimization. As a result people got to know about the sex slavery. Currently, Koreans are still demanding Japan to officially apologize. We say that these women have an unresolved deep *han*. Another example of national *han* might be a desire for reunification between South Korea and North Korea.

In Korean culture, there were many ways to release or fulfill *han*. People tried to achieve economic success to get out of poverty or to pursue higher education to fulfill their desires. Religious practices were also ways to deal with the emotion. People went to Buddhist temples or shamans to make wishes and release their *han* through rituals. In the

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18th century, when Catholicism was first introduced in Korea, its message was quite appealing to many of the lower classes, slaves, and women who are known to have deep *han*. In Korean history, in the time of suffering like Japan colonialism, Koreans gathered and prayed together in churches. There is a special way Korean Christians commonly pray. It is called Tong-sung prayer. As I grew up in my church, I often observed people praying out loud whether they were alone or together. One of Korean theologians explained that Tong-sung prayer is one of the spiritual channels to release the emotion of *han* in the lament prayer. Since *han* is usually suppressed emotion that was unspoken, praying out loud help people to express their deep grief and anger. As Koreans do Tong-sung prayer together, everyone prays out loud at the same time, and it makes a mysterious harmony of the sound. Can you imagine it? As people pray out loud, some people start to cry, and others pray for them. It becomes a communal lament prayer. Last year, when I had a difficult time of my life. Some of Korean friends of U of T came to my apartment and did Tong-sung prayer for me. We prayed together and cried together. This was a great comfort for me. And we believe that this prayer is led by the Holy Spirit who is an ultimate comforter and healer of our *han*. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, helps people who suffer from adversities to speak out their pain and comforts them. As we pray together, the Holy Spirit leads us to recognize Immanuel God who suffers with us and to see the hope that Jesus brings to us. As we pray together, the Holy Spirit also helps us to repent and return to God and commit ourselves to the calling that God gives us. So, it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

In today's passage, Luke chapter 4, we observe the inauguration of Jesus. Jesus went into a synagogue and stood up to read the scripture. Jesus unrolled the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and read it. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was the full of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. The purpose of his ministry was clear. It was liberating people from oppression, suffering, pain, death, sin, evil power, and *han*. I believe this is grace. The

grace of God. This same spirit has worked from the beginning and desired to liberate people from those bondages. As the people of Israel were liberated from the oppressive system of Egypt, they were invited to follow God who has the Spirit of freedom. Unfortunately, as they failed to follow the Spirit, they made an oppressive system again. Now, Jesus who is full of the Spirit is going to liberate all humanity through his life, death, and resurrection, and pour the same spirit to invite people to enjoy the freedom and also to participate in the ministry of Jesus.

In this regard, the beginning of the Anabaptist movement was also driven by the Holy Spirit. The church was supposed to preach the good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recover sight for the blind, and to release the oppressed, but instead became an oppressive institution at that time. The Anabaptist movement followed the Spirit of freedom that liberates them from the oppression. I believe as they run away from their persecutors, they must have experienced the comfort, conviction, and love from the Holy Spirit.

Regarding this topic, I had a conversation with my husband Pablo Kim Sun. I shared with him that sometimes I feel that Mennonites do not often talk about the Holy Spirit. Pablo shared what he learned from John Rempel. He mentioned that at the beginning of Mennonite faith, there was a strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the grace of God, however, as they focused on the commitment and the responsibility of Christians, somehow, the emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the grace of God was weakened. His comment helped me to understand that we need to balance between the emphasis of the Holy Spirit and discipleship.

Since the theme of Summer sermons is “On the Way: views from our faith journey,” as a person who is from different cultural and spiritual backgrounds and willing to walk the Way together, I wanted to reemphasize the presence of the Holy Spirit who was the initiator of the ministry of Jesus and also the Anabaptist movement.

This summer, we were all in different places and walked different journeys. There were joys and sorrows. In all this process, I believe the Holy Spirit was with us whether we recognized it or not. The Spirit has constantly invited us to freedom,

comforted us, and given us hope and calling. As we wrap up this summer, I pray that each of us and the TUMC community remember and give thanks for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As we embark the new season, I pray for the Holy Spirit to lead our next steps and help us to follow the way faithfully.