August 20th, 2017

ICA Sunday Pulpit Message

**The Son of God Receives the Challenges of the World (Mt. 22:15-22)**

(Intro) Challenge and Response

It’s good to see everyone. Let’s greet those around you. My wife is in Korea. She’s receiving some medical treatment in Korea and she had a chance to meet her neighbors from over 30 years ago. That’s when the interpreter, my daughter, was still very young. Back then, we lived in a five-story, government-funded apartment. Many government officials resided on each floor depending on their department. The first floor, where I lived, was for the tax department. The second floor was for the accounting department and so on. My neighbors often looked after my young children because that’s when I quit my job and started doing ministry as an assistant pastor and going around houses to do Bible study with my wife. Because of that, my neighbors kept in touch with my wife. So recently, there was a reunion of these neighbors and their family members. My wife scanned everyone. She noticed that some are Christians, some are atheists, and some are Buddhists. And then, she thought about last week’s pulpit message, “The sons of God relay the Word of God.” And because we are sons of God, we need to take the Word we learned and relay it to others. Depending on this Word, my wife relayed God’s Word to a Buddhist. Some people jokingly ridiculed her for evangelizing. However, the Buddhist person accepted Jesus. My wife and other people were surprised. Regardless of how strong your faith is, God works in those who hold onto the Word. It might appear as that the pastor is simply giving the sermon, but if you accept the Word as God’s voice, you will receive answers.

This is the title for the today’ s message: “The Son of God receives the challenges of the world.” There was a person called Arnold Joseph Toynbee. If you look at one of his works, he used the term “challenge and response”. In his book, he claims that the greatest civilizations arose from challenges and harsh environments rather than from an affluent environment. Some of the greatest civilizations in the history are the Incan civilization, the Mesopotamian civilization, and the Egyptian civilization. Originally, the people who established the Egyptian civilization are Africans. They were hunters living in the northern Africa. One day, the climate of Africa changed. The rain front moved upward to Europe and the land of Africa became dry and arid. The people who dwelt in the northern Africa had to decide whether they should stay there or move somewhere else. The people who decided to stay there and continue on hunting all perished. However, the people who became nomads in a desert survived. Also there were certain people who traveled near the Nile River where the great civilization arose later on. Near the Nile River is fertile land because there is plenty of water. However, every year, the land gets flooded and destroyed. In order to forecast when they would get floods, the people developed astronomy, geometry, and solar calendar. Also, they constructed banks around the land to minimize the effect of flooding. Because they had many constructions, they developed a pulley and wagon. With all of these skills and capabilities, they were able to build the pyramid. In the midst of difficult environments and hardships, they had many developments.

Let’s talk about China. China had the Yellow River civilization. In China there are two great rivers that flow through—the Yellow River in the north and the Yangzi River in the south. The Yangzi River creates a good environment for people to live. However, the Yellow River in north gets extremely cold in the winter and the water freezes and creates many issues. In the summer, the land gets flooded and causes many problems to people. However, the great civilization arose not from the Yangzi River but from the Yellow River. When the nature presented people with many challenges, people responded to them and survived. Earlier we mentioned the Mayan and the Incan civilizations. They are the opposite of what we were previously talking about. The affluent Mayan civilization quietly disappeared because they sustained peace for too long. When all of a sudden they were faced with outside enemy, they were defenseless. Such situation is called the Dodo bird theory. The Dodo bird appears in the story of Alice in the Wonderland. The Dodo birds in India had plenty of food where they didn’t have to compete with other species. So they didn’t have to fly. One day a Portuguese sailor saw these birds and named them Dodo, which means a “fool” in Portuguese. When people moved in to this land, there were other animals that they brought with them. And because of the competition, the Dodo birds became extinct. This is explained in Toynbee’s “challenge and respond”. Therefore, you must believe that God is giving you challenges and hardships to make you stronger and bless you according to His hidden plan. When we have no problem or hardship, we will perish like the Dodo birds. I bless you that you won’t perish like the Dodo birds by a small difficulty.

1. The challenge that Jesus receives in His field
2. The combined attack from the Pharisees and the Herodians (Mt. 22:15-22)
3. The ignorant attack from the Sadducees (Mt. 22:23-33)
4. The attack where the lawyer tests (Mt. 22:34-40)

What kind of challenges did Jesus come across? In Matthew 22:15-22, Jesus was faced with 3 trials. The Pharisees and the Herodians came together and attacked Jesus. The Herodians were pro-Romans. The Pharisees were anti-Romans. If you think about it, they have opposing views. But when they were attacking Jesus, they became allies. It is the same way today. When people want to attack Jesus, even enemies come together. The Pharisees and the Herodians started talking to Jesus by saying how great He is. However, they weren’t there to learn from Jesus, but they tried to trick Him with a question: “Do we need to pay taxes to Caesar, the Roman emperor?” If Jesus answered that they have to pay taxes to Caesar, what would have happened? People would have called Him pro-Roman and would oppose Him. What if He said that they shouldn’t pay taxes to Caesar? The pro-Romans would have attacked Him. Either answer would have been wrong. He didn’t say, “I never thought about that before. Let me think about it and come back to you.” Instead He said, “Why do you test Me you hypocrites?” And very accurately He said, “Whose image and inscription *is* this?” People said, “It’s the picture of Caesar.” Then Jesus said, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” He was able to explain them about the truth. He accurately responded to the challenge. Like the Son of God, Jesus, we should also respond to challenges in this way. We, saved Christians, are living in two different worlds. Because we are the people of God’s Kingdom, we give our offerings to church. Because we have the background of heaven, we are able to change this world. Do we have to pay taxes in this world or not? Paul said in Romans 15 to obey the laws set by men for God. So you should pay taxes to your country. Paul also said in Romans 13, “Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due*,* customs to whom customs.” When I was in Korea a few weeks before for the World Remnant Conference, one pastor asked me whether America, the nation found on God’s Word, treat the pastors well. I answered him yes because the nation still has some culture of Gospel. The pastor was complaining about the Korean government trying to tax the religious leaders. So I told him that all American pastors also pay taxes. Over a three-month period, I pay about $1,100. I’m not trying to say against or for Korean pastors but because they don’t pay what they should, nonbelievers criticize them. Apostle Paul, Jesus, and the Bible are telling us to pay the taxes. So Jesus responded with truth to the challenge the Pharisees and the Herodians brought.

When this was over, the Sadducees asked Jesus. The Sadducees believe that when people die, that’s the end. They have the same belief as the Jehovah’s witnesses. They don’t believe that souls are eternal. So the Sadducees asked Jesus about the Bible. “If the first brother dies, what happens to his wife?” In Deuteronomy, it says that the wife of the deceased brother should marry the second brother and make a family. So if the second brother dies, the wife should marry the third brother. Why do you think God commanded this? So the Sadducees used the verses in the Bible to ask Jesus, “if I indeed resurrect and go to heaven, who will be my real wife?” Jesus told them that they are ignorant of the Bible and God’s power. After one resurrects and enters into heaven, there is no marriage or family. You will be as if you are angels. After death and resurrection, you will forever be with God. Jesus corrected the wrong belief the Sadducees had. Those who believe in God will die and live again and ascend into heaven. It is recorded in Isaiah 26 and Daniel 12 that the dead would resurrect. If you don’t believe in the resurrection of the souls and spirits, you are denying God’s power. The marital relationship is not applicable in heaven. And Jesus said, “When you pray, you pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If they are dead, you are praying to the God of the dead. Abraham is still alive. The souls resurrect.” When Jesus replied to them accurately, they couldn’t say anything. He accurately gave an explanation based on God’s Word to the challenge. It doesn’t mean that you have to be witty with your words to win argument. If you know things correctly, you can relay them correctly.

After this, the lawyer tested Jesus by asking, “There are so many books in the Bible, what is the most important?” Jesus simply answered that they need to serve God with all their heart, mind, and soul. That’s the 1st commandment. The 2nd commandment is to love your neighbor as your own body. Jesus faced these challenges and accurately responded to them. We, the sons of God in Christ, have no choice but to face the challenges of this world. What must we do? What kind of posture must we have?

1. The attitude that we must take toward the challenges of the world
2. The clear understanding of the situation (1King 3:9,11, Ac. 2:14-40, Phil. 1:10)
3. The solid position towards the truth (1Sam. 17:26-47, Ac. 4:8-12)
4. The brave courage for the change (Is. 60:1, Ac. 20:24)

You must have a clear understanding. And once you find the truth within it, you must have a clear opinion. You must also have boldness and bravery for changes. What is the reason why the people of God are living on this earth? It is to change and heal this world with the background of heaven. This is why God has called you and sent you. God didn’t send me to Austin to simply build a church and live happily ever after. You aren’t just immigrants simply to make a good living. You are called and sent to heal and bring changes in your field. You must always remember this. God called me for the working of re-creation on this land. Why am I going to the University of Texas at Arlington? It is because there are souls you need to save, cultures you need to change. Why am I living in Kileen? God has sent me to save that place. Then, the “sweet home,” “happy house,” and wealth follow along. So first, you must comprehend the situation correctly. Look at the big picture. There is a flow of past, present, and future. You must see this. Pray God to open your eyes.

1 Chronicles King Solomon asked God for wisdom for his people. God complimented Solomon because he didn’t seek for fame or wealth but wisdom. So he received the greatest wisdom. Solomon became a king when he was young. He wasn’t trying to enjoy his wealth, but wanted to help his people. In Acts 2, during the time of Pentecost, Jesus’s disciples were filled by the Holy Spirit. They spoke in tongues. However, people criticized them for being drunk. At that time, Peter rose up with 11 disciples and accurately proclaimed that we are not drunk. The Word of God through the prophet Joel has fulfilled. He assessed the situation and explained it correctly. I hope you have such grace and answer. Pray so that you can discern the truth and see the big picture of past, present, and future. We also need rational evidence. This is what I mean by height, depth, and width. Height is about our spiritual height. Depth is about our mind’s depth. Width is about the reality of this world. You should have a firm stance of these. In 1 Samuel 17, David came to Goliath. David’s brothers scolded him. However, David said, “What have I done now? *Is there* not a cause?” David had a cause. As he was tending the sheep, he enjoyed the blessing of God being with him. He wrote beautiful psalms with God’s grace. He overcame the lions and the bears that tried to attack his sheep. For David, the Jehovah God was his parent. So he said, “My parents might forsake me, but God will not forsake me.” To David, God was like his good friend. He said, “I love you, Lord.” However, Goliath was insulting God. David had a firm stance. He said, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the Lord’s, and He will give you into our hands.” Although David was young, he had a firm stance because he had experienced the power of God in many incidences.

Once you have your stance, you need courage to bring about change. You should find who you are and why you live. This is what we mean by upward, sideward, and downward. Upward, God exists. Sideward, co-workers exit. Downward, remnants exist. So stand up and shine the light. Although there will be enemies in Jerusalem, I will still go. “But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself,[a] so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” Adults here as you are listening to this message, you might feel that you are quite distant from this message. Living in the greatest nation of the 21st century as immigrants is hard. But you should know the will of God. Especially for our young remnants, you should grab hold of this. Don’t stay in the midst of your trials but pray that God may use you. What should we do then?

1. The content we must concentrate as sons of God
2. Imprint on the Word – God’s plan (Ps. 1:1-3, Ac. 1:3)
3. Root in the prayer – God’s power (Mk. 9:29, Ac. 1:14)
4. Nature in the evangelism – God’s use (Ac. 1:8, Ac. 3:6)

As sons of God we must concentrate on imprinting, rooting, and making nature in God’s Word. God’s will and plan are hidden in the Word. You need to be able to see God’s will in the present reality. The Bible clearly tells us about the Kingdom of God. However, the reality might not seem like it. There is no God in our fields. There are more people who don’t believe in God. You need to find out the difference in order to organize your stance. Then you know what to do and make a right decision. In order for you to see the reality correctly, you need to know God’s Word first. That’s why you need to have the imprinting of God’s Word. That is why the Psalm 1 records that the blessed rejoice upon meditating God’s Word. You should be thankful for the Bible that enables you to clearly see the reality. That is why Jesus during His last 40 days imprinted His disciples with His Word. We should receive the same answer in our 40-day intensive training. Do not be afraid of others’ eyes. This is God’s blessing that you must enjoy on this earth. It’s okay if you are not doing well. You must be imprinted by the Word of God.

Why do we have to be rooted in prayer? When we are rooted in prayer, we can experience God being with us and receive His power. Then, you will have a firm stance. Mark 9 He says, without prayer evil spirits won’t flee. We will become courageous when we experience this prayer of evil spirits fleeing. Jesus prayed with His disciples in His last days. And on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came. And the disciples started speaking in tongues. The disciples were able to boldly preach about God’s Word with the biblical evidence. As sons of God, we need such stance. We have no choice but to receive strength when we pray. Only when you have strength, can you express your stance. It’s such a privilege that we can directly ask God.

It is the nature of evangelism. If you live the life of an evangelist, you have courage to bring about change in your field. When you resolute to do evangelism, that is when you are able to see the souls that God has prepared. Although I am not eloquent, I can accurately relay the Gospel to the prepared souls. Acts 1:8 says, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” This means you will have the nature of an evangelist. Peter and John did scheduled prayer. As they were on their way to the temple, they saw the crippled man. Because they had the nature of a witness, they could say, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” After this incidence, the doors of evangelism opened in Jerusalem. If you pray about your imprint, root, and nature, God will change your family and your field.

(Conc.) The solution to all problems depends on whether you know who Jesus is. (Mt. 22:41-46)

At the end of Matthew 22 Jesus said, “You are well versed with the Bible. What did David say? Who’s descendent is the Messiah that you are eagerly waiting for?” People answered He is the descendent of David. Then how come did David called Messiah “My Lord”? That means that by blood Jesus is the descendent of David but He is God. The Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees didn’t realize that Jesus is the Creator God who has control over all creations. If they had realized Him, they would have not treated Him that way. The key to solving all problems depends on who Jesus is in relation to you. Many people don’t know Jesus correctly like the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees. If people knew who Jesus is, they would have behaved differently. There was one believer who held a sign saying, “Believe in Jesus and go to heaven.” And next to that person, a nonbeliever held a sign saying, “Then I won’t believe in Jesus and just go to hell.” Nonbelievers don’t know about Jesus and they curse and criticize churches. However, God said He will finish all the problems when one acknowledges and confesses that Jesus is the Christ. Who is Christ? Christ finished all the problems. He will take care of you. I bless you in the name of Jesus Christ that you will acknowledge Him and give the confession of faith.

At this time we need to confess, “I am un-restorable being. I have heard Jesus Christ whom You sent. I believe that He was crucified on the cross and resurrected to make me anew. I confess that I will follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit whom You sent in the name of Jesus Christ. We pray in the name of Jesus.” If you have made this confession, God will answer you and use you in the midst of the challenges. “Be bold. I have overcome the world.”

(Prayer)

Dear heavenly Father, we thank You. In today’s worship, we heard Your Word. Help us to boldly respond to the challenges of the world. Help us to hold onto the Word and correctly see the reality. May we enjoy the mystery of prayer and have a firm stance. May we change our fields with the power that comes from the nature of an evangelist. Give us the courage that the world cannot give. And may Your Kingdomw be established on this earth. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.