

5/24/26

Sermon Title: The Declaration of Judgment and the Invitation of Grace

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 11:20-30

Woe on Unrepentant Towns

²⁰ Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.

²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

The Father Revealed in the Son

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

²⁷ “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Even though Jesus had demonstrated miracles and mighty works that testified that He was the Messiah, He pronounced judgment upon the cities that refused to believe in Him and did not repent.

²⁰ Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.

“Repentance” was something both John the Baptist and Jesus equally called for, and it is the response people must show when the kingdom of heaven comes.

Jesus pronounces judgment upon the major cities of Galilee.

First, He declares judgment against Chorazin and Bethsaida.

²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.

Chorazin was located about 3.2 kilometers (2 miles) north of Capernaum, which Jesus had made the center of His ministry.

Bethsaida was located east of Capernaum and was the hometown of Andrew, Philip, and Peter.

Jesus declared that woe would come upon these two cities.

The issue was not that they had been openly hostile to Jesus’ ministry.

Rather, their problem was that even though Jesus had performed many mighty works among them, the people did not repent.

Jesus lamented that if such mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon—Gentile cities that were regarded in the Old Testament as symbols of wickedness—even they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

He then declared that on the day of judgment, these cities would receive a more severe judgment than those Gentile cities.

Tyre and Sidon were Phoenician port cities located along the Mediterranean coast north of Palestine and were known as centers of Baal worship.

The expressions “wearing sackcloth” and “sitting in ashes” were both traditional ways the people of Israel expressed repentance and mourning.

Jesus rebuked Capernaum, the very city He had made the center of His ministry, even more severely.

²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.

²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Capernaum was located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Because it was an important center of transportation and commerce, Jesus made it the base of His ministry.

In this city, Jesus performed more miracles and taught with greater authority than in almost any other place.

He healed Peter’s mother-in-law, who suffered from a fever; the centurion’s servant; the paralytic carried by his friends; the woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years; and many others who were sick, weak, or demon-possessed.

He even raised Jairus’s daughter from the dead.

In addition, He taught them through many parables.

Yet despite all this, the people became proud and showed no response.

They did not repent.

Jesus rebuked Capernaum by saying that even Sodom—a city synonymous with wickedness, corruption, pride, and hardness of heart—would have repented if such mighty works had been done there.

If that had happened, Sodom would not have been destroyed.

For the Jewish people, Sodom represented the place where those who committed the most grievous sins received God's judgment.

Jesus declared that on the day of judgment, Capernaum would face a more terrible destruction than Sodom.

Capernaum was the place where Jesus invested the greatest effort to reveal that He was the Messiah and to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of heaven. There, Jesus performed many miracles and proclaimed the gospel. Yet despite this, the people failed to recognize who Jesus truly was because of their pride, which had lifted them up to heaven, and they did not respond to His message.

Even though they had received great privilege, they did not repent.

To enjoy privilege and yet fail to show the expected response is pride.

Jesus pronounced destruction upon proud Capernaum, which had experienced the privilege of witnessing the presence of the kingdom of heaven but remained unresponsive.

He declared that it would be brought down to Hades.

Because the kingdom of heaven had already come, those who refuse to respond to the Messiah who brings that kingdom will share the destiny of those who belong to Hades.

Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled not only spiritually but also historically when the region ultimately fell under Roman destruction.

Our becoming children of God is not the result of our own works or our own will,

but entirely the result of God's sovereign grace.

It is only natural that those who have received grace should live lives worthy of that grace.

God has given us an even greater grace than Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum ever experienced.

Though we are sinners, God allowed us to receive Jesus Christ as Savior through His Word and become His children.

We have become children of God not because of our own works or our own will, but entirely because of God's sovereign grace freely given to us.

Therefore, we ought to live as those who have received God's grace.

Jesus shows us the way to live as children who have received God's grace.

First, Jesus gives thanks to God that He has hidden the gospel from the wise and understanding and revealed it to little children.

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

"The wise and understanding" refers to those who are self-satisfied and consider themselves wise in their own eyes, rejecting the Lord's teaching.

It points to the people of the cities around Galilee who saw Jesus' miracles and mighty works, yet refused to repent and receive Him.

"Little children" refers to those who recognize their own ignorance and sincerely and humbly seek only God's help.

The statement that the gospel has been revealed to little children also means that only those who are humble, fully depend on God, and trust in Him can understand the truth of the kingdom of God.

If we are to live as children of the Lord, we must be humble.

To live as God's children means to live a life of faith that completely depends on and trusts God, just as a little child fully depends on and trusts his or her parents. A person who is humble before God believes in God's work in every circumstance and seeks His help even in the midst of hardship and adversity.

Understanding spiritual truth is possible only through God's sovereign grace. Without the help of the Holy Spirit and His inward illumination, no one can truly understand Jesus and His kingdom.

Jesus gives thanks that this truth has been revealed to His disciples through Himself, the Son.

By calling God "Father," Jesus reveals the unique and exclusive relationship between Himself and God.

Jesus declares that God, the sovereign Lord of the universe, reveals His will to some and hides it from others according to His purpose, and Jesus fully affirms and supports the will of God the Father.

²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

The Son, Jesus, has been given authority to reveal all the knowledge hidden in heaven.

Therefore, no one can know the Father except through the Son.

²⁷ "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

After speaking of His intimate and unique relationship with the Father, Jesus invites those who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him.

He says that He Himself will give them rest.

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

“Those who labor” refers to people who are weary and exhausted from striving and carrying many burdens on their own.

The “heavy burden” includes not only the suffering caused by sin, anxiety, and physical obligations, but also the burden of the law and traditions that had been imposed upon people.

The religious leaders of Israel had departed from the true purpose of the Law and required the people to keep the heavy yoke of the “tradition of the elders,” which was based on their own interpretations of the Law.

Jesus boldly rejected these distorted traditions of the elders.

By healing the sick on the Sabbath, He revealed that the true purpose of the Sabbath was to uphold the dignity and value of life.

Jesus says, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me.”

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Jesus tells us that the way to find freedom and rest in Him is to take His yoke upon ourselves and learn from Him.

If we are to cast off the yoke of the world and the law—which bring suffering and death—we must take upon ourselves the yoke of Christ.

The yoke of Jesus is not a heavy burden like the one imposed by the teachers of the law, but one that is easy and light, bringing rest and peace.

Jesus says that if we take His yoke upon ourselves and learn from Him, we will find rest for our souls.

Here, the phrase “will find” means to discover or to find.

True rest is not something we create; rather, it is something already found in Jesus—something He has promised to give, waiting to be discovered.

As we give thanks for the Lord's gentleness, who has compassion on sinners like us, and for His humility, by which He willingly came to this earth and bore the yoke of the cross to save us, and as we devote ourselves to learning the Word of truth, we finally come to find true rest in the words of our Lord, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Beloved members of the Church of Godly Dreams,

Today's message has shown us two important truths.

One is a warning against the hardened heart that does not repent even after experiencing God's grace.

The other is the loving invitation of Jesus to all who are weary and burdened.

Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum experienced more grace than most.

They saw many mighty works and heard the words of the Lord.

Yet they did not repent, and in the end, their privilege led them to a greater responsibility in judgment.

To receive grace and yet fail to respond is not ignorance but pride.

The greater the grace we receive from God, the more humbly we must come before the Lord.

On the other hand, Jesus did not turn away those who are weary and burdened.

Rather, He called them, saying, "Come to Me."

To those weighed down by the burdens of sin, anxiety, wounds, and the hardships of life, He promised true rest.

And this rest is not the temporary comfort the world gives, but the eternal rest found in a life that takes His yoke and learns from Him.

We must not be like Capernaum, taking God's grace for granted.
Instead, we must become like little children who humbly depend on God.
We must lay down our reliance on our own strength and wisdom and take up the yoke of the Lord.
We must learn His gentleness, learn His humility, and remain in His Word of truth.

True rest is not found in this world.
It is not found in success, wealth, or people.
Our true rest is found only in Jesus Christ.

Even today, the Lord is calling us:
"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened."
May we respond to His call in faith and live in true peace and rest in the Lord.
I bless you all in the name of Jesus Christ.