

John 15:4-8
Fruitful Life

I bless that God's grace and peace be with you all.

We are once again facing a difficult time. Unlike what we expected, the lockdown period was extended. As a result, there are more people who are struggling. The world needs our prayers more than before.

The church also experiences difficulties. There is nothing more important than the congregation gathering together. However, we can't meet right now. How hard must it be? Gathering together and praying, worshiping, listening to the sermon, and having fellowship together. Passively, this is the same as getting a flu vaccine. It protects our faith from worldly thinking. Actively, it provides the energy for us to live as the salt and light of the world.

Therefore, as the lockdown period extends and we aren't able to meet together, we will obviously be concerned that the church will become weaker. However, the way we treat this situation will change the result of it.

Through today's passage, I will talk about the attitude of the churches that are coping with the coronavirus pandemic and what we can do in our situation.

Firstly, we must solve the misunderstandings about our faith.

In verse 8, Jesus says "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples". We have a tendency to become addicted to bearing many fruits. We want to glorify God through our life. It is great. We don't know if this why, but what we hear the most

in our faithful lives in the church are the words “obedience” and sacrifice”. Both words require action.

However, I believe that when we use words such as “obedience” and “sacrifice”, there is some misunderstanding.

The story about the grapevine and the branch portrays this well. If the branch is well attached to the grapevine, its fruit will bear automatically. The fruit which is the result, occurs not because the branch did something well, but because it receives the nutrients that the grapevine provides. There are many times when Christians fail to remember this truth. They try to bear the fruit on their own, and think they will succeed.

For God’s sake, they worship. For God’s sake, they share faith. For God’s sake, they help the homeless. For God’s sake, they donate to India for their recovery from COVID. They do this and that, all for God’s sake. They believe that when they do such things with a heart of obedience and sacrifice, they can bear fruit and glorify God. However, now in this lockdown, we cannot do any of these things. Churches fear this reality, the reality that we can’t do anything.

There are some churches that are creating trouble during this COVID situation.

They believe that in Jesus’ name, we must gather together and worship. They assert that no matter what situation, in Jesus’ name we must do such things. So, the congregation gathered together. As a result, they caused many COVID patients. So, the church was treated as a place that causes COVID patients. This is so sad.

We must remember. The things that we do for God, we can do without God. Even if people don't believe in Jesus, they can do these things too. One person came to find Jesus and said "I helped someone in Your name and I filled someone's needs in Your name. I did many things in Your name. Please remember me." When Jesus heard these words, He said "I don't know you".

Loving brothers and sisters,

Doing for God's sake is precious. Living as the salt and light of the world is Jesus' command. However, maybe there is something that must happen before this.

This is the second thing I want to talk about. It is "Remain in Jesus!".

It is verse 4: "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine."

This passage is like Jesus' will. This was His last discourse with his disciples, the night before He was captured. There would have been so many things He wanted to say and ask. If we summarise all these things into one phrase, it would be this: "Remain in me". Faith is intimacy with God, love with God, and becoming one with God, before it is obedience and sacrifice. Becoming one with God, our heart aligning with God, God's will becoming our will, God's dream becoming our dream, our temporary life remaining in God's eternal life. This the beginning and the end of faith. Look at the lives of the disciples who were with Jesus. When the disciples remained in Jesus, they lived an amazing life. Even when they were caught in a life-threatening storm, they remained safe and secure in a tiny

boat. Even when they were chained by the world, locked up like a beast behind bars, in Jesus their hearts were free. Even when they were faced with a reality with no escape, they were people who created an exit in the one who gives them strength. However, not a single one of them said it was through their own strength or that they made it possible. All of them confessed that it was because they remained in Jesus.

We must remember the order of Jesus' words. "Remain in me. Then, you will bear fruit". Obedience and sacrifice are great words that express faith. A church with obedience and sacrifice will grow. However, an obedience and sacrifice required without remaining in Jesus or without deep intimacy with God, will choke the throat of Christians, more severely than the law.

Loving brothers and sisters,

Let's remain in God. The lockdown period may not be a crisis for the church. Instead, I believe that it will be a good opportunity for us to become closer to God.

Then, how can we remain in God? Let's look at verse 7: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you". The most certain way we can remain in God is by staying close to His words. It is because remaining in God means being one mind with Him.

I want to share one way to listen to His words.

Firstly, prepare a bible and a notebook.

Secondly, record the passages that you read, and write down the chapter and verse that especially speaks to you. And if you can, write a title too.

Thirdly, summarise the passage that you read.

Fourthly, apply this to your life.

Lastly, pray about your application.

Finish this entire process within 20 minutes.

Loving brothers and sisters,

Don't waste this precious opportunity that God has given us. Reflect on yourselves if you are remaining in God. Practise the process mentioned before. When we have a deep relationship with Jesus through the words, our lives will be filled with amazing fruits. I bless that this blessing will be with you all.

Everyone say Amen~~