

Sermon Title: A Call for Deeper Intimacy – March 16, 2013 (Scripture is from the ESV)

Introduction

Good evening, everyone. I'm blessed to be here at joint prayer meeting and to have the privilege to speak. There is a word that has been on my heart for some time, but in the past few weeks it has been burning stronger in my heart like never before. A portion of it I already preached once before back in 2011 in a sermon titled, "The Greater Levels of Faith," and I've also referenced it in past times while leading prayer for Korea, but the fire for the message is still burning. And God has added more to it.

The title of tonight's sermon is "A Call for Deeper Intimacy."

Oak Tree Project

But before I get into the message, I have some good news to share. For those of you who don't know, I have been directing an orphanage volunteering ministry in Seoul for the past seven years called Jerusalem Ministry. Last year we raised funds for a scholarship and mentoring program for orphans who desire to attend university.

Over the years of serving at the children homes my staff and I have been grieved by the state of the kids after the graduate from high school and have to move out of the homes. These kids don't have family to go to and they don't have emotional or financial support. Their lives are lonely, their work is difficult, and, without love, their future is bleak. The lack of financial support forces these kids to take on extra jobs that cut into their study time and their rest time. The lack of emotional support can cause the kids to soon crumble under the stress and give up on their studies. In such a state the kids are vulnerable to alcoholism, joining gangs, sex trafficking, and simply a really hard life. So we wanted to create both a scholarship fund to help with their finances and a mentoring program to make them strong, secure, and loved.

Last year we aimed to raise enough funds for three recipients, but God provided more and we were able to take on four students. Here is a picture of their first meeting with some of the leaders of the ministry. Sky and I were in the States so we weren't able to make this meeting.

Picture

We accepted three first year boys and one second year girl. Pastor Jee from Hillside is mentoring the girl who is a theater major and performs in musicals. Mijeong from Hillside is mentoring one of the boys and my wife Sky and I are mentoring the other two. One of them is studying social welfare, another is studying tourism and Japanese, and the other's major is computer information system.

We named our scholarship and mentoring program Oak Tree Project because our prayer is that these children will be able to rise up out of the storm clouds and their tough backgrounds and become oaks of righteousness, plantings of the Lord for the display of His splendor. We know that for many of these kids if they could just have someone believe in them and connect them to the Lord, these diamonds in the rough could achieve their dreams and impact the entire nation.

Our prayer is that not only will these four succeed, but that we will be able to provide more orphans with more scholarships and mentors each year. We will keep you all posted here at joint prayer meeting with prayer requests for the students and for the program. Something beautiful has just begun!

Ripe for Judgment

And now for the message. Please open your Bibles to Ezekiel 16.

I have been serving in Korea for seven years now but I go back to America now and then to speak at different churches and fellowships. The two verses I am about to have us read are the two verses that always burn in my heart about America whenever I visit. I can't shake these verses from my mind while I am there.

Ezekiel 16:49-50 – Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it.

Excess of food. Did you know that 1/3 of America is overweight, or worse, obese? And did you know that despite the obesity problem in America that 40% of the food in the country goes uneaten? And yet at the same time, did you know that one in six Americans don't have enough to eat?

While visiting America, some of my friends who teach at public schools told me that every morning the cafeteria is filled with kids who are fed from the School Breakfast Program set up for the poor and the hungry. My friends know that these kids have little to eat at home. I visited a church's after school program in a poor area of Virginia where out of 45 kids attending, 30 of them attended solely because of the snacks offered by the program. They didn't have food to eat at home.

Let me read Ezekiel 16:49-50 again...

Ezekiel 16:49-50 – Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it.

I'm going to be honest right now: America is in trouble. Every time I visit America I preach messages of warning and exhortation to the church that they will only survive if they are praying and keeping close to the Lord. Every time I visit I think the churches are expecting me to share more about the orphanage ministry and about the kids, and while I do share a little about them, I can't help but preach God's warning to them. It's a fire that burns in my heart that I can't deny. I don't want to see my loved ones in America get caught up in the judgment. I don't want to see the churches fall away. The stampede is approaching. Judgment has come and is continuing to come. People have to be praying and keeping close to the Lord. People have to stop looking to the economy or to the military or to their education for their comfort and their deliverance. They have to solely look to the Lord.

I thought that this message was just for America. When I was asked earlier this week to speak tonight I figured I would preach something else. But God soon spoke clearly that the word I shared in America needs to be shared with you all as well.

Dream of Stampede

The other night I had a dream that I was in a big spacious field with different people from New Philadelphia Church and I was warned that a big stampede was coming. I felt a strong warning in my spirit and begin to call for people to gather to go to shelter. Then I saw the animals starting to come over the hill (similar to the movie The Lion King) and I started rushing everyone to a house for safety. But they were all sluggish in responding and I had to pull some of them. At one point one of the younger leaders was standing groggily outside the door and not moving as the animals were getting dangerously closer. I slapped his face in urgency and yelled at him, “Wake up!!!” as I pulled him inside. I then watched as the animals stampeded past the house trampling everything in their path.

What are the symbols in this dream? The stampede shows impending judgment and danger approaching. The house represents the house of the Lord, which represents prayer to God. The house, prayer, represented the only place of deliverance and safety. The sluggishness of the people in the dream symbolized a lack of clarity, urgency, and conviction about what was coming.

What I felt as I woke up is that some of you are being sifted in this hour. For some of you the enemy has been bringing attacks of confusion and doubt these past couple months. Some of you are wondering if it’s all really worth it; what God is doing here in Korea and the commitments he has led you to make.

Luke 22:31-32 – Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Jesus spoke this to Peter just before His greatest trial that would lead to great deliverance. Jesus was able to follow through and die for all mankind. But each of His disciples, in the moment of trial, fled from Jesus and Peter even denied Him three times. These disciples had been with Jesus for three years now, witnessing miracle after miracle and even experiencing the power of God work through them. Jesus had warned them of all that would come, but even still, in the moment of trial, they all collapsed like a house of cards. So much for their commitment as disciples. Things looked bleak and scary, so they abandoned Jesus in His greatest time of need.

Little did these disciples know that the trial Jesus was enduring would bring deliverance for the entire earth. They had no idea about the eternal glory that would follow the Cross. Their eyes had been trained only for the natural, not for the spiritual. They were only seeing in the temporary, not in the long term. They were living by sight, not by faith. They chose to abandon the Savior of the world in order to be safe for the moment.

Commitments Must Be Strong

I feel that in this hour of sifting God is calling us to strengthen our commitments. God is wanting to awaken us to greater levels of faith. God is wanting to take us to deeper levels of intimacy.

Let me make this clear: **God can only bless things motivated by faith.** Whenever we choose to reject the ways of faith and instead choose our own way, which is often the way of comfort, security, and quick pleasure, then God cannot fully bless us. In fact, God is going to judge the idols and the things that people choose to put their trust in over Him.

Some people look to grad school as the answer, others look to America for a better and safer life, and others look to manipulating things using their own intelligence in order to succeed. People choose these things because their faith is more in them than it is in God. Their faith is in the temporary and not the eternal. But because everything of this world is temporary it will eventually fade away. **God's judgment is simply reality coming forth, that anything not marked by God will eventually fade and fall apart.** This is why God is calling us to deeper intimacy.

The greatest example of this is Abraham and Lot. I have spoken about them before, but it bears repeating...

Abraham and Lot

Abraham was given promises by God on multiple occasions that as Abraham would walk with the Lord and obey Him, God would bless him abundantly. And as Abraham obeyed and left his home country, he indeed became more and more blessed. So much to the point that **Abraham knew that his blessing was not dependent on the earth being fertile or desolate, he knew his blessing was fully dependent on God.** Whether there was rain or there was drought, which in this time translates to whether there was growth in the economy or the market crashed, Abraham was independently blessed.

So in Genesis 13 when Abraham's flocks and Lot's flocks become too big for them to be together, Abraham lets Lot choose which land he will inherit. Lot's focus is on the land. He notices the land of Sodom as much more fertile, so he chooses to take Sodom, believing that the land will bless him. Abraham simply agrees and takes the less fertile land, not worrying about anything because he knows God will bless him. And immediately after Abraham makes this choice to trust in the Lord, God appears to Him and says basically, "Look around, I'm giving you everything... north, south, east, west... it's all yours." God rewards faith.

And what happens to Lot? **Lot continued to believe the "fertile land" (Sodom) would provide for his family. His trust wasn't in God but was in the world and the land around him. He lost everything.**

His trust was so much in the world and in the land around him, that he even rejected the commands of the angels sent to deliver him and his family from the destruction of Sodom.

Genesis 19:17-20 – And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away." And Lot said

to them, “Oh no, my lords. Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life. But I cannot escape to the hills, lest the disaster overtake me and I die. Behold, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one?—and my life will be saved!”

The angels tell Lot to go to the hills and remove himself from the area, but Lot has become too engrained in the land and he can't let go. He begs them to let him just stay in a small city. **He is basically trying to hold on to whatever he can, and not putting his trust fully in the Lord.** The angels grant him his wish. But do you know what ends up happening? Lot becomes so filled with fear that he and his two daughters end up living in a cave. And how do they procreate? The daughters feel they are so isolated that they choose to get their father drunk and sleep with him in order to have children. How ridiculous is that!?

The difference between Lot and Abraham wasn't that one was materially blessed and the other wasn't. The truth is: both were materially blessed, at least initially. **But one of them, Lot, chose to find his provision in the world and he lost everything. The other, Abraham, chose to find his provision through the Lord, and he gained everything.**

When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Satan's first temptation was simply for Jesus, who was hungry, to turn the stone in the bread. Seems harmless, right? But let me read to you Jesus' response in Matthew 4:4...

Matthew 4:4 – But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Jesus refused to turn the stones to bread because He knew it was the Father's job to provide. Let me say that one again, “Jesus refused to turn the stones to bread because He knew it was the Father's job to provide.” Jesus would not manipulate the things of the world for His own provision. Jesus would instead look to the Father. Even when He fed the 5,000, He first looked up to heaven and said a blessing.

When God takes us to greater levels of faith, we are no longer looking left and right to world for deliverance or ways out, instead we are looking up to the Lord. And even when it seems like everything is falling apart and God is leading us to an unknown place, we follow His word and we trust in His Word that the righteous will never go hungry. **God is calling us into this intimacy.**

Now we come to the most important part of the message. Pay attention, please.

Only the Intimate Will Be Protected

In the end, **only the intimate with God will be protected.** Only those who walk closely with Him will be delivered from the judgment of God. Please turn to Revelation 11... (read slowly)

Revelation 11:1-2 – Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure **the temple of God** and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the

court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and **they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.**”

Notice that only the intimate worshipers, only those within the inner part of the temple who were close to God’s heart, would be counted and delivered from judgment. But the lukewarm Christians, those lingering in the outer court, would be given over to the Gentiles, who here symbolize the ways of the world. It says that they will **trample** the holy city.

Remember my dream of the stampede? A stampede was coming so I had to get everyone in the house to avoid it. Let me read God’s command in Revelation again...

Rise and measure **the temple of God** and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and **they will trample** the holy city for forty-two months.

The ways of the world are trying to overrun and trample the church. In this hour Satan is trying to get Christians to focus more on themselves and the world around them rather than on God. Satan is trying to get Christians to compromise their faith and their commitments to God, and instead settle on the ways of the world. Satan wants us to fall into the same condition as Lot.

We cannot compromise. And in order for us to not compromise, God is calling us to deeper intimacy and stronger commitment. **It’s only those who worship Him within the temple that will be protected.** Just like the dream God gave me, He is calling us into the house. He is calling us into shelter and the urgency is so strong some of you need to be slapped awake to it. Keep your commitments, church! Keep them to the Lord and keep them to those the Lord has led you to. Do not falter!

God is calling us to move in faith in this hour. So many of us want to have clear plans for the future and clear steps to follow, but that only requires a little faith. God wants us to move with Him like the Israelites in the desert, learning to move when He says move and stop when He says stop. God wants our eyes fully on Him.

So many had their trust in their money, and then the market collapsed and they lost everything. So many had their trust in their education and their degrees, but they are still jobless. So many had their hope in marriage but years later they find their marriage empty and unfulfilling. So many had their trust in the comfortable and safe life of America, and they are lifeless without any fire or zeal. All of them are all living apart from the Lord, as Lot did. There is no joy in life when it is all clearly mapped out for you. And there is only fear and anxiety when that so-called planned life suddenly collapses.

It’s Worth It

More than anything tonight, I want you guys to know that living by faith is worth it. It’s worth it! Our God loves us more than anyone and everyone in the world. He cares for us and wants the best for us. God’s stories and testimonies are always the best. God wants to take us deeper and romance us. He wants to surprise us. And He wants our faith so strong in Him that even when suffering comes, we are not moved.

Ji Hwi's Testimony

A beautiful example of someone going deeper with the Lord would be one of our recipients of our college scholarship, Ji Hwi. Ji Hwi is a true orphan without any family. She loves the Lord and has been growing with him. She is a second year in college and during her first year along with her college studies she had to work during almost her free time to pay her tuition. As she grew with God though, He began to challenge her more. A couple months ago she learned about tithing for the first time. It scared her, because she was barely making it by and to give a tithe would likely mean she wouldn't have enough money. But she was encouraged that God would bless her and provide for her. So Ji Hwi tithed and entered a greater level of faith. And wouldn't you know it, just a week later she found out about our scholarship and applied and was soon accepted. God is taking care of her and because of her act of faith she is now able to trust Him even more. And we know God is going to continue to build her and the others.

You might have faith that God will provide for Ji Hwi, but do you have faith for yourself? Do you believe God wants to romance you to? Are you willing to step out more in faith so you can experience Him more? Are you willing to trust your future fully to Him? It's worth it. Life becomes real when you walk with Him. It becomes fun!

I have experienced this excitement as I have lived my life fully surrendered to the Lord and to His will. I have my concerns for the future, but as I have kept close to the Lord and cast my cares upon Him, He has always reassured me.

One example of this would be our future kids. Sky and I know we are supposed to have kids and we are to raise them in Korea. But what about the army term for our sons? And what about their education? And what about their caretaking and their wellbeing?

If God called us to be here, then of course He has that all taken care of...

Homeschooling

While Sky and I were visiting my parents in the States my mom shared with us a dream my dad had a few months ago. He shared the dream with my mom and my sisters. He told them that in his dream he saw my mom, who used to be an elementary school teacher, homeschooling their grandchildren. My sisters got excited because neither had children yet and the thought of mom teaching their kids sounded neat, but then one of them asked my dad, "Wait, Dad, were your grandchildren in your dream Asian?" My dad paused and thought, and then exclaimed, "You know what? They were!"

That dream made Sky and I laugh. My Dad has had many dreams of North Korea and the future and wants to eventually come out to join in the work. But amidst my concerns for our future kids, I had never imagined my mom, who is a licensed and gifted teacher, coming out and schooling them.

God provides. And it's exciting!

Wash With the Word

I want to close my message by washing you all with the Word, with the truth of God. You can follow along as I read from Psalm 37...

Psalm 37:1-4 – Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers! For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:5-6 – Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will act. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.

Psalm 37:7-9 – Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. For the evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.

And then from 2Corinthians 4:17...

2Corinthians 4:17 – For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Pray

If we cannot keep our commitments while waiting for God's blessings, then how can we expect ourselves to keep our commitments to the Lord when suffering comes?

- A call for us those lingering outside to renew their commitments to the Lord
- A call for us to ask God to show He is better and to strengthen our faith... for us to no longer go led by our flesh or by our fear, but led solely by His Spirit
- Call for the church to stand strong and safe amidst the judgment and compromise around us