**Title: Blessing of Faith Always Pointing God’s Direction**

**Text: Acts 15:36-40; 2 Timothy 4:9-18**

**The word, “Blessed”, in the Psalm 1, is a very huge word in the Bible. It might be a word which is a vague and unclear. So now, to get a more clear meaning of the word, “Blessed”, try to replace it with “happy”.**

 **The Bible doesn’t say, “Happy is the man who has a good circumstance or a lot of money, land or property. The Bible says, “Happy is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But happy is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.”**

 **The Bible says that blessing of life is not decided by what you have but what you are, depending not on your possession, but on your character. It’s telling us that blessed is the man whose character resembles God’s character. It means that happy is the man whose mind, attitude, and way of thinking constantly imitate God’s character in the grace and guidance of God’s word and counsel.**

**Ex) The Palestine land has a pretty high temperature making a serious impact on dry weather. The plants mostly cannot survive or grow in that kind of environment. Only the tree which is planted by the streams of water, or which is deeply rooted in the earth toward the streams of water is able to survive in that dry weather and the extreme droughts bearing the green and healthy leaves and fruits.**

**The blessed man is a person who has God’s character deeply rooted in God’s word and truth. He keeps a solid stance of faith and life which is not shaken by the waves, the winds and the words of this world. That’s why he lives the life, bearing fruit in that dry weather and drought.**

 **In the Psalm 1, David tells us that not those who have the things of this world, but those who have and grow to imitate God’s character are happy. The blessing is not first related to the circumstance surrounding you, but first related to your inner world, private world which is in your character.**

**That’s why man is more important than money, more beautiful than a flower. The money or flower doesn’t have the inner world, spiritual world. Think about a beautiful flower. It blooms, fades and falls. That’s it. That’s all it has in this world. The flower, if the most beautiful, quickly fades and falls and is finished. It is a creature without the spirit.**

 **But the human being is not just like the flower, but the only spiritual creature which has an inner world, mental world, spiritual world. That’s how we were made in God’s image.**

**As time goes by, our physical body gets old and weak. Our image and face is supposed to change with time.**

 **However, you are more beautiful than any flower and any creature among the world because you have God’s character and image in your spirit. The Bible says, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”**

**That’s why each of you and all people should be respected and recognized as the person who has human dignity. That’s why you deserve to be respected as a being which is the most glorious and beautiful among all the creatures in the earth. That’s why the Lord God the Creator commanded us to rule over all other creatures of the world.**

 **Blessed is the man who continually tends to make his spiritual world faithfully. He can make and enjoy a life of peace, joy, and victory even in the circumstances of dry or stormy weather. That is a true blessing of God and a source of many blessings. It means that God’s character itself is the blessing. God is with His children who have his character, follow His word and imitate His ways.**

**EX) Think about a compass. The compass needle always points north, or is supposed to do that. No matter where you put that, it never changes. If the needle would point any other direction because you put that in the different place, time or weather, it would be a broken compass.**

**The blessed man always tries to point in God’s direction. The needle in his spirit doesn’t’ change because of where, when, or how he is. In any place, time, or emotion, his heart constantly points God. His compass needle of faith is not shaken even in trouble and suffering. Even in dry weather and serious drought he always turns toward God. He comes to be watered from God’s streams of water continually. He will come to an end of making fruit in God’s care, and he is called the blessed man.**

**This morning, we will take a look at the Apostle Paul and Timothy. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy when he was in prison. Paul wanted Timothy to visit him in prison. He missed him. He wanted to see him. The letter seems to be written by Paul in cold weather. I think it was not winter, but probably close to winter when it was becoming colder. That’s why Paul says in v. 21, “Do your best to come to me before winter.” And also, he is asking Timothy that Timothy would bring him his cloak because of the cold weather in prison.**

**Ex) Many biblical archaeologists agree that the temperature in winter in those days must have been 10 degrees lower than nowadays because there was no global warming effect before 2000 years. Paul really needed the cloak or coat in prison.**

**And also, he wanted Timothy to bring him a scroll he had kept in the safe. The scholars are not 100 % sure of what it was, but they mostly think that it was one of the scriptures of the Old Testament. The New Testament books were not yet available.**

**Preparing for the winter coming right up, Apostle Paul needed a cloth and a book. In the very cold prison, he really needed both to spend the long time of physical winter and to keep the faith by staying in God’s word during the spiritual winter. That was why Paul wanted Timothy to come to him to stay physically warm and spiritually healthy in prison during the long winter.**

**And, there was another really important reason why Paul said to Timothy, “Do your best to come to me quickly…” According to the 1 and 2 Timothy, and the studies of biblical scholars. Timothy was actually going through some difficult and challenging circumstances in his ministry. That’s why Paul constantly kept on praying for Timothy.**

**It means that Paul now wanted to see Timothy spiritually restored and strengthened. Paul wanted to have the comfort, the strength, and the hope through the restored faith and spiritual life of Timothy. Paul, who was locked in prison, had a hope to bloom his flower of faith again. He hoped to overcome the cold, hunger, sickness, and many other physical and mental challenges of prison during the long and hard time of winter by meeting with Timothy. And so, Apostle Paul looks forward to seeing Timothy before winter to spend the winter time of cold and loneliness in joy and hope.**

**In the voice and the heart of Paul for Timothy, I think you can feel the voice and the heart of God who calls us in life. Christ calls us and compels us. That’s why we are here worshiping and following him.**

**You saw a man in the text who is Demas. Paul tells Timothy that Demas had deserted him. He tells in v. 16 that some of the fellow workers and the Christians left him.**

**Working with the Apostle Paul, they had been helping and supporting him in ministry and prison, but began to leave him one by one. Why would they leave him in his ministry? We have a clue about that. In the scripture, Paul says, “They loved this world.” It means that the direction of their spiritual compass needle turned in other directions, instead of always turning to God.**

 **Paul seems to be disappointed, depressed, and in despair because of Demas and the fellow workers who had forsaken and left him. And that’s why Paul was eager to see Timothy who was faithful, and trusted by Paul, and whose spirit always pointed to God even in the stormy situation in ministry, in the spiritual time of winter. Yes. Paul wanted to have the comfort, strength and hope in the meeting with Timothy, a blessed man.**

**At this point, there is something to figure out in v. 11. Paul tells Timothy to bring him Mark. Who is Mark? Why would Paul want to see him? It is an interesting and inspiring story as we saw in the text, Acts 15.**

 **In the first mission trip, Apostle Paul heard from Barnabas, his first fellow worker and special friend that Mark wanted to join the mission trip. Mark was Barnabas’ cousin. Paul accepted Mark, and then they started for the mission trip.**

 **I think that Mark might not have thought that the trip was very serious. He seems to have thought of the trip simply as a good chance or experience that might be helpful for his life and faith.**

 **But, the travel was full of the trouble. It was much harder than Mark had expected. He gave up the trip not long before, and went away back home by himself. Apostle Paul, who was very strong and strict in rule and principle, was very upset with Mark and his behavior.**

 **And later, at the time of the second mission trip, Mark wanted to join the team again. I think Mark had been very sorry and regretful for his behavior on the last trip. Barnabas had thought that he would be able to work it out this time. He wanted to give him one more chance.**

 **But, Apostle Paul strongly objected and rejected it. There happened sharp disagreement and serious conflict between Paul and Barnabas. They even came to decide to be separated from each other in the mission trip.**

 **In fact, Paul owed Barnabas his life. When most people doubted that Saul would believe in Jesus, only Barnabas trusted him, contacted him, and connected him to the Jerusalem church. That’s why Saul was able to become the Apostle Paul as a minister, evangelist and missionary of Christ.**

 **But, he lost that precious, favorite and the most special friend and fellow worker because of Mark. I think he didn’t really like Mark. For Paul, Mark would be a person he didn’t even want to think about again. It was probably hard for him to forgive or accept Mark again.**

 **So we now look at v. 11. “Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.” What does that mean? Apostle Paul opens his heart to forgive Mark, to forget everything in the past, embracing and accepting him anew in the present. Paul even wants to work with him.**

 **The Apostle Paul’s compass needle of life always pointed to the cross of Jesus. That probably made him struggle and regret his actions and feelings toward Mark. Because he had the painful experience of being deserted by his fellow workers he also must have been sorry for the way he deserted Mark.**

 **Moreover, think about it honestly and exactly. When Apostle Paul had been Saul, he had been the man who hated, abused and hurt Christian people and the Christian community. He was a leader against Christ. That’s why he confessed that he was “the worst of sinners”. One fault Mark made was actually nothing compared to the huge faults that Paul made in his life.**

 **So, Apostle Paul now comes to forgive Mark in many ways. It means that he can also be reconciled with Barnabas. And, he probably recognizes a truth again that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him.”**

 **We are in winter now. But, God calls us in our lives saying, “Do your best to come to me quickly before winter.” We have to prepare for the long, cold and hard time of spiritual winter before it gets here. Unlike the physical seasons of earth, spiritual seasons are not as easy to predict. We need to prepare our hearts now. Jesus is asking and urging us to prepare and keep our compass needle always pointing God’s direction so that we might not enter an eternal winter which will never stop.**

**Blessed is the man whose compass needle of life is always pointing to the way of faith in any circumstances. Blessed is the man whose needle can fix the minds and faith on God’s eternal presence in the unstable and unsettled circumstances keeping balance and peace during the harsh storms of spiritual winter. And, blessed is the man who has the spiritual compass needle, faithfully indicating the direction to Christ. Amen.**