How to Live Wisely

11/12/2017
Y. Joe Kim

Ephesians 5:15-21

15 Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise,[16]making the most of the time, because the days are evil. [17]So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. [18]Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, [19]as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, [20]giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. [21]Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

1. Last Sunday In Texas

We come to church each Sunday to worship the Lord, hear good news of Jesus Christ, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. But sometimes the opposite can happen. Last Sunday, 26 people of the First Baptist church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, lost their lives and 20 were wounded in the middle of their worship service by an angry gunman. One of the victims was an eight-month unborn fetus carried by one of the victims. The youngest of the children was a one-year-old. Eight of those gunned down belonged to a single family, the Holcombes and the Hills. This is truly a tragedy! I've heard that this was the largest mass shooting in Texas state history. The alleged gunman was identified as Devin Patrick Kelley, a 26-year-old man. He was mad at his mother-in-law who was a member of the church.

I don't want to talk about the background of the gunman this morning. I am interested, however, in our reactions after we heard the news. When you heard about the shooting what came to your mind first? Did you think about death? Or did you think about gun control and what we need to do to prevent these types of attacks? This attack reminded me that life can be taken from me at any moment. Although we try our best, we realize that we often have little power over our own lives. Have you ever thought that today could be our last day? If that was the case, this sermon could be my last message. Wow! I'd better have a sense of urgency. I should spend my time wisely. Do I know how to live wisely? I hope what Paul says to the Ephesians gives me and you wisdom in how to live wisely.

2. How to Live Wisely

St. Paul says in Ephesians 5:15-16, ***"Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil"*** (NIV). Paul suggests that the Ephesians and we

live wisely by making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. I am sure you agree that these days are evil. Last Sunday we lamented the death of the eight-innocent people in New York City. And when we were worshiping last Sunday, 26 worshippers including the 14-year-old pastor's daughter were killed in the middle of worship in Texas. I'm sure the people in the small town never thought about the possibility of a shooting in their town.

Oftentimes, there can seem like there is no way to solve the problem completely in the world. How can we change the evil world into a peaceful world? Paul suggests to "***make the most of every opportunity***." The King James Version of the Bible translates this verse, "***redeeming the time, because the days are evil***." The Greek word "exagorazow" means "to redeem or to ransom by payment of a price to recover from the power of another." Paul suggests that we are called to be willing to pay any price to make the world better. In Galatians 6:10, Paul says, ***"Whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.***" We may feel like bad things are at the hands and power of other people. But we are reminded that we are called to be transformed and then to transform others and the world around us as we bring God's peace and the good news of Jesus into our community.

3. Be Filled with the Spirit

In Ephesians chapter 5, Paul gives us four suggestions. First, understand what the Lord's will is. Second, be filled with the Spirit. Third, give thanks to God for everything. And lastly, submit to one another. We might think that Paul suggests four different things, but these four suggestions are related to one another. God's will is for us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit, we can give thanks to God for everything. When we are grateful to God for everything, we can "***submit to one another out of reverence for Christ***" (5:21, NIV). Paul's way of living wisely started by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Paul talks about the Holy Spirit. But the Bible also talks about an evil spirit. The Gospel of Mark chapter 5 talks about a man with an evil spirit. According to Mark 5:2, "***When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tomb to meet him***." He lived in the tombs and no one was able to control him. The man went out day and night crying out wildly and cutting himself with sharp stones. Jesus noticed that it was not him but an evil spirit who controlled him. So Jesus commanded, "***Come out of the man, you evil spirit***" (Mark 5:8). Verse 15 tells us that many people were afraid when the man was sitting in his right mind.

We know the difference between a person who is controlled by the Holy Spirit and by an evil spirit. When a man is controlled by an evil spirit, evil actions come out of that person. John 13:2 says, ***"The evening meal was in progress,***

and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus." The author of the John's Gospel tells us that Judas Iscariot was controlled by the devil or an evil spirit.

What about a life that is controlled by the Holy Spirit? In Acts 20:22-23, Paul tells us how he lived his life. "***And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me***." Paul didn't mind being imprisoned and suffering if the Holy Spirit led him. He didn't despair but used the opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our Christian life does not guarantee joy, happiness or success all the time. But as long as the Holy Spirit wants, we do not need to shrink or be afraid but be strengthened and encouraged during the difficult times when we are following after the mission we receive from Christ.

4. Missionaries' Wives in Russia

The wife of a Korean missionary in Moscow had stomach cancer four years ago and had a partial gastrectomy. She still stays in Moscow and continues to support her husband. Another missionary's wife in St. Petersburg has a kidney problem and needs dialysis every week. She stays in Korea for her treatment, but her husband still continues his ministry in Russia. I learned that Korean missionaries in Russia do not have health insurance. I was so touched by their faithfulness and dedication to their calling. I am sure that such dedication is possible because they are led by the Holy Spirit.

5. Praising and Giving Thanks

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we praise and give thanks to the Lord. Verse 19-20 say, ***"As you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts,*** ***[20]giving thanks to God the Father at all times***.**"** The results of being filled with the Spirit is joy, and this joy gives us a lasting peace in our hearts and a song of praise to God in our voices. It is when we are filled by the Spirit, we are able to give thanks to God always even when the situations around us would seem otherwise.

How can we be filled with the Holy Spirit? John 14:16 says, ***"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever***.***"*** The Holy Spirit was poured out when we became a Christian. How do I know? 1 Corinthians 12:3 says, **"*No one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit*."** The term "advocate" in Greek means "a lawyer, counselor, comforter, and helper." The Holy Spirit is with us just like a spouse or a constant helper. The Spirit is like our coach and our advocate at the same time. The Spirit guides us, tells us what to do, and helps us in every step of life.

Last Sunday, our Sunday school children talked about giving thanks to God. How often do we give thanks? Once a year? Once a month? Once a week? Or once a day? Paul says "at all times." In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul says, "***Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you***." The term "in all circumstances" means always. In both good times and in difficult times, when we feel like it and even when we don't, we are called to give thanks to God, the one who is in control of everything and can overcome any situation in life.

This morning, I would like to introduce to you another person who wants to give thanks to God. Please welcome Sara Connelly. Last week and yesterday I visited Joanie Cahoon at the BID Plymouth & Royal Nursing Home in Buzzards Bay. As you may know, all her treatments for her brain cancer were stopped. As you can see in this picture, she is smiling as usual. Despite her situation, she has continued to be joyful and grateful for everything.

6. Conclusion

Ephesians 5:21 says, "***Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ***" (NIV). In Colossians 3:23, Paul says, ***"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men***.***"*** Paul tells us to treat others like Jesus. After I came back from Russia, I felt compelled to treat others like Jesus, especially missionaries serving around the world. I hope that, once in awhile, missionaries can come to us and have a short break.

7. Application

When we hear the tragic news of a shooting, we mourn with the victims and families of those killed and wounded. We turn to the Lord in prayer, longing for a day when this kind of violence will cease. Many people ask what actions we can take to prevent something similar from happening in the future. We know we can't completely prevent violence from erupting. Then what? How can we as a church and as individuals protect others?

Many people suggest practical tips to prepare for the unexpected. But I believe the first step should begin with ourselves. If we are like Jesus, being filled by the Holy Spirit, letting the Holy Spirit guide our lives, making the most of every opportunity to love the Lord and people, people around us will be influenced by us.

We are called to put God and his people first before ourselves. Then, as we treat others like Jesus, sharing love, giving hope, praying for them, and practicing the presence of Christ in our words and deeds, this world will be transformed not necessarily by our actions, but by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Our lives and many of the lives around us will experience God's kingdom on earth. May the Holy Spirit give us wisdom and lead us to live wisely being led by the Holy Spirit every day and every minute. Amen.