

Proverbs 16:1-3 John 20: 19-23, 26.

여러분에게 그리스도의 평화가 함께 하길 빕니다.

Peace be with you in the name of Jesus Christ!

I would like to ask you to greet each other with this Christ peace in front of your computer monitor, cell phone, or where you are now!

Peace be with you!

First, I thank you for inviting us to join in your worship service today.

My name is Bock Ki Kim. Sook Kyoung and I have worked in South Korea since 2013. As MC Canada Witness workers, we are working for God and his kingdom through 1) developing Anabaptist resource in Korean, 2) networking among Anabaptist-Mennonites, 3) planting a church in Seoul and 4) sharing the Christ peace to many people around us. We also work closely with the Korea Anabaptist Center, which is a resource center, Mennonite Church South Korea which is the national church body, and other Christian church traditions through Korea Anabaptist Fellowship.

Today's Bible passage is about peace Christ has given for us. I believe that it is the core message to Christian churches because it is important for all of us during the pandemic era. Basically, it talks about three things: the Christ Peace, the Holy Spirit and the action for Binding and Loosing.

Today I will not exegesis the text verse by verse because we all know the text very well. Instead I want to invite you to see the reality of disciples' situation in 1<sup>st</sup> century and ours in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the text, the disciples were in panic. They didn't know how to handle it, because they tasted the bitterness and the sting of the death. They lost their master through the cruelest way of killing people, called crucifixion. So, they lost their direction. They lost the meaning for their lives. Once they planned to be in the kingdom of God. Even they dreamed a dream to sit at the right and at the left in the Lord's glory (Mark 10:37).

But instead of the glory, Jesus's disciples lost their master, their plan and everything. So, they hid themselves into a secret place and locked the door.

Emotionally it is almost the same situation as we live these days. The number of people who lost their job is increasing. It is incredibly sad to hear whole the world is struggling with finding new way of life under the pandemic. Although people talk about "the new normal," still we don't know what it means. Family members stay at home together, students cannot go school for many months, they cannot play in the playground although their friends are near, individual distance is only 2 meters, but the emotional distance is way more than that. Meeting held through internet, but feeling is not exchangeable well. We want to see hope beyond the corona virus, but no one knows when it will come. We never planned that kind of living.

Let's go to the today's text. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus

came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"

During their fear, without any explanation, someone came and states a strange message, **Peace be with you!** Maybe it is not appropriate message to those who lost their hope. But the stranger came and repeatedly proclaim the message three times (**Peace be with you!**) (**Peace be with you!**) (**Peace be with you!**)

We often try to understand the problem, try to fix our situation, although we cannot do. But Jesus just appears to his disciples and proclaim the peace three times. It reminds us that peace is not accomplished by human plan but God's will. It is imperative and just given by God regardless of any human circumstances.

As soon as he speaks to the disciples, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." It is the powerful action from Jesus. This action reminds us to the first scene of God's Creation when God formed Adam and Eve.

In the Genesis story, the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:7).

The word, "breath" in John 20 and Genesis 2 is the exact same. Disciples who hid themselves are broken in fear, emotion, and relationship. Then Jesus appeared among them.

We often call Jesus as the second Adam. The second Adam, who is resurrected from the death, now appeared to the disciples and breathed on them, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit." As soon as he breathes, disciples' spirits are refreshed. The Jesus gives new breath and new life to his disciples. After that, Jesus shows there is a new way of life for his disciples which we call "Binding and Loosing" to forgive each other.

I often think that the 1<sup>st</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> life will be similar. The first disciples hid themselves in a locked room, while the 21<sup>st</sup> century disciples self-quarantined in our own house.

Amid the COVID-19, every day we face fear, anxiety, and roller-coasting up and down emotions. We hold two different emotions together: joy and sorrow, the hope and despair, plan to do but easily given up, wearing mask or not.

I don't know how many of you know about the "circle process" as a communication tool. In Early April, I received an email from Kay Pranis. Kay is professional circle facilitator and well-known author and speaker internationally. As soon as we enter the COVID-19 to pandemic stage, she prepared a 4 pages documents, called "On-line Support Circle." As soon as I received it, I translated and shared it through SNS including the Facebook. You can access and download it at the COMMON WORD, the MC Canada Resource center in Winnipeg. These days I used it over 50 time of Zoom circles including online support circle, online grieving circle, reading circle, and even earth-care circle. As a facilitator of circle process in different settings, I often ask people to express their emotions since the COVID-19. There are many expresses

emotions such as fearful, anxious, uncertain, unstable, stressful, frustrated, even depressed. Although they would have got out of these emotions, it is beyond their ability. So, most people hold two different minds at that same time.

We want to be joyful, but we are sad. We want to meet people face to face, but we cannot do due to the social distancing. We are ok but not ok. It is real.

Christians are not exceptional. We want to visit church members, we want to drink a cup of coffee, we want to pray together in the sanctuary, and we want to share the bread and wine, but we cannot. It is real. So, we must not blame anybody including ourselves. Instead we need to accept the reality as it is. The two different emotions are natural and real.

Instead we need to realize that the death and the COVID-19 is not the last word. Although Jesus's disciples locked the door, although we are used to lock our emotional doors, even though we are living during our fearful situation, there is someone who came and proclaimed the Peace!

Christ peace is not like worldly peace. We cannot plan it, but it is just proclaimed by God especially during uneasy situation. Jesus repeated it three times. It means Jesus is eager to give us his peace during difficult circumstances including the COVID-19.

Whenever I post any words or photos, I ended it with the word "Peace" for many years. These days, some people follow it. The peace needs to be proclaimed every day and every circumstance.

Mennonite bible study group in Seoul did not skip any single meeting during COVID-19. We gather through Zoom regularly. We spent about 2 hours for bible study every Sunday. Circumstances hinder us, we are searching a new way. Although we experience the COVID-19, we are realized that we can connect or contact to more people in different ways. Now we are connected to more people and globally. Like today, we are connected to each other in between South Korea and Canada. The network has become larger and bigger than we imagine. We are connected to each other through the network. This has become a blessing for those who did not meet each other before.

Imagine God's connecting way from the heaven and earth. God sent Jesus, and Holy Spirit. The spirit is working in strange ways. Sometimes in breath-in, sometimes in breath-out. Sometimes in place, sometimes through the network.

Corona Virus teaches us many new possible ways of God's working.

Our networking is not just staying in our physical space, time and location. It is bigger than our experience and imagination.

God's peace is always way bigger than our real world and imagination.

I want to close my sermon with church's way during and beyond COVID-19. I often think about what the future church looks like. As we know already, church has many different functions: my summary is like this:

- 1) Ritual as religious function
- 2) Education
- 3) Relief
- 4) Counselling (caring)
- 5) Fellowship
- 6) and sense of community

- 1) the ritual function yields the place to science
- 2) the educational function yields to the school board and university.
- 3) the relief function yields to relief organizations such as World Vision, UNICEF, Good neighbors, Save the Children, Compassion, Mennonite Central Committee, etc.
- 4) the counselling function yields to the professional counselors and social workers and related organizations
- 5) Fellowship lost its function to all different kinds of social and sports clubs.
- 6) Sense of community lost its function to local community center.

Then what shall we do? I believe that the Jesus's actions will be the key functions for 21<sup>st</sup> century church. So, let's proclaim the Christ peace regardless of situation even during the COVID-19, let's send the breath, and the Holy Spirit to the world, and let's practice the rule of Christ called "loosing and binding." faithfully.

I believe that it will be a way of Christian church during and beyond the COVID-19. AMEN.