

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
December 24, 2017

The Savior Who Was Alienated

Luke 2:1-7

2:1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

2:2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

2:3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town.

2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,

2:5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

2:6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.

2:7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

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## 1. Alienated Savior

Last week, I spoke on passages from the Gospel Luke that the Angel told Mary that she would conceive and bear the God's son and Mary visited Elizabeth. These are called The Annunciation and the Visitation respectively. Today, for the continuation of last week, I will talk about the birth of Christ which is called the Nativity.

I have ache in my heart every time I read the verse ; There was no place for them in a guest room.” (verse 7) This “guest room” was thought that one of the room in a travel inn. The census of population decreed by Caesar Augustin was that all went to register at their own town. Therefor we understand that lots of people came to the small town to register and every travel inn did not have vacancies. There was a scene in the Christmas play where Joseph was with Mary was pregnant, and asking innkeepers for a room. The innkeepers might say to Joseph, “We are full. Ask other inns.” “What? Is a baby almost born? Oh no, that will be trouble for other guests.” “You are dressed poorly. Do you have any money? During registration, you have to pay double fee. If you don't have money, better sleep outside.” They were refused to be able to stay anywhere.

But, the guest room was not said inns in the Bible, also no innkeepers of a Christmas play were shown in the Bible. We better think the guest rooms were not inns, but could be guest rooms at the relatives' house. At that time, there were not many “ travel inns.” Even if there were some, they were indecent ones. When many of the first century Christians traveled , they avoided inns and stayed in other Christians' homes. In the Bible, Hebrews 13:2 says, ‘Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.’ It was recommended since there was

this type of backgrounds.

When Joseph was going to Bethlehem, he was likely depending on their relatives and other families. But relatives here or families there did not take them in, in stead they were tossed around. They could not stay at the relatives. When they were rejected by relatives or families who were connected by blood, they felt more pain than an innkeepers' refusal. But Joseph was not discouraged and he probably asked an animal shed of a relative forcefully and stayed.

And, that night Mary had a baby. The Son of God was not permitted into the human's room and was born in a manger of an animal shed. It was actually a cave for animals. The baby was born to be the King of Judea, but Jewish people rejected their own king and did not accept him. Although He was born as the Offspring of David, people of Bethlehem the town of David did not accept Him. He was not accepted as the King, or the Offspring, and also he was not accepted as a human being. Then, he was expelled in the animal shed. Ever since the Savior was born, he walked the road of sufferings of "alienation."

## **2. Pains of Alienation**

In the Bible, many books predicted and described how the Savior would be going to suffer. For example, in Psalm 22:6 it says, "But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people." Jesus the Savior was treated as animals at birth; and when he was crucified on the cross he was a worm that could be more valueless than animals, as if people expel and animals stamp on. I see the painful suffering of "alienation" Jesus went through in His life.

I suppose it is the most crucial pain that you are alienated or rejected by others. People often get through if they either help others or receive applause from others even though they aren't good at or don't like their works. Otherwise – no matter how much effort people put forth for others, yet no one notices or recognizes it, people would feel non-existent. Everyone has different shapes, abilities, and identity; and people often evaluate others by their looks, talents, position or social relationships. If you don't have any of those your identity and existence could be seen as meaningless. In Japanese society, people sometimes attack others for bullying in schools and even in companies. They ignore you and behave, as they don't verbalize anything to you. It is very oppressive when people around you despise you without using words; and the victims start to ignore themselves, and then sometimes commit suicide.

At some place, there was a Christmas play; they had 100 kids; although only 4 or 5 out of them were on the stage. Other kids put on black clothes and played a role, "others." One parent asked the leader, "I'm a bit afraid to ask, but if you have enough kids, would you mind if I let my child out because he/she is getting cold." Then the leader answered, "No, absolutely. I need numbers of kids here. You don't need to make your kids do anything, just make them sit on the stage." The parent told me she felt really disappointed, because she couldn't accept the fact that the leader actually treated the kids as trees or stones, the "stuffs" on the stage without any lives. I say this again; it is the most painful thing that you are not treated as human, no matter how you're young or adult, or women or men.

Jesus had the most superb character; He was merciful and faithful,

just, humble and behaved soft. He had the best wisdom and power, too. His teaching was authoritative enough for every one. He healed illness, made the storm still, and even gave the dead life. People, however, refused His character and accepted neither His wisdom nor power. In this fact we shall see His suffering; moreover, we shall see the sin that we alienated, ignored, and refused the Savior and lost our own salvation.

### **3. Salvation of the Alienated**

When Jesus headed for Jerusalem, he was planning to go through Samaria and preach there, but Samaritans did not accept Jesus. Then the disciples said “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” (Luke 9:54) But Jesus scolded them and took a different route to Jerusalem. Jesus had authority over heaven to punish those who did not accept Him, but He did not do so. Jesus had said to his disciples “ If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.” (Matthew 10:14). But He never plotted revenge to those who despised him, ignored him or rejected him, but instead He quietly took all the pain and suffering.

Why is this? He let people alienate him, neglect him or reject him so that He was able to save those who were alienated, neglected or rejected. In facts, those to whom Jesus reached his hands were tax collectors, prostitutes, the sick, the handicapped, widows, women, children, Galatians, and Samaritans, all were excluded from the Jewish society. Jesus did not judge people based on how they looked from outside but treasured each one of them as irreplaceable

individuals. Those who came to Jesus were accepted by Him without any exceptions.

But Jesus Himself was not accepted by the people. Even his disciples abandoned him. When they were asked by Pilate which one they wished to be saved, they screamed “ Give mercy to Barabbas, put Jesus on the cross!” People rejected the Son of God, the Savior, as worse being than the thief, or less than a human being. At the end, He was also abandoned by God. When Jesus said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46), Jesus was truly abandoned by His Father God. When humans are rejected from God, that is the worst estrangement. But the reason why Jesus experienced this “worst estrangement” was to bring back humans to God, who were far apart from God.

The Bible says “Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I am the one who helps you, declares the LORD; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 41:14) The Savior himself endured being treated as “a worm not a human being” and redeemed and saved humans who were equal to worm.

Jesus had been unwanted, un-welcomed and excluded by people from the birth. Luke said although the birth of the Savior was announced by the angels, no one but shepherds came to worship him. In Matthew, it said, although the wise men came from East to worship the King of Jews, Jew themselves were annoyed by them and tried to forget about Him. King Herod even tried to kill the Savior. John 1:10-11 said, “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.” Christmas is the time

for joy, but this is such a sad word.

But the Bible continues as follows “Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Christmas is the time when we receive Jesus Christ in our heart and life as our “Savior and the Lord”. This is the time when we celebrate the birth of Jesus as the Son of God who received by God as a loving child. When we experience the spiritual birth and renewal of our faith, we can truly celebrate the birth of the Son.

A hymn written by Paul Gerhardt reads as follows,

*One thing I hope Thou'lt grant to me, My Saviour! ne'er deny me,*

*That I may evermore have Thee within, and on, and by me.*

*And let my heart Thy cradle be, Come, come and lie Thou down in me,*

*With all Thy joys and treasures!*

Today, let's sing this song as a concluding prayer. Let's dedicate this to God not just as a music but our heartfelt prayer.