

“My Cup Overflows”

Every week, we have been studying Psalms 23 written by David who was once a shepherd. This morning, I would like to talk about the phrase “My cup overflows” in verse 5. First, let us read the entire Psalms 23.

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. ²He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. ⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalms 23)

As you can see, this phrase “My cup overflows” follows the preceding sections which we have already studied. God protects us even when we face our enemies and when we are troubled. God provides us with a table for us to rest and regain our power. Furthermore, God pours oil over our head. He pours the Holy Spirit over our head. When the Holy Spirit is poured on us, we get a power from above that we cannot obtain ourselves otherwise. This Holy Spirit will turn us into someone who can bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

This is an exciting news. We are amazed how the Lord has prepared for us generously. But, this story continues on. At this table God has prepared for us, God would fill the cup placed in front of us. The cup is not only filled, but it overflows. This morning, I would like to talk about this overflowing cup.

The first point is the **Overflowing Grace**.

Overflowing Grace

John, the disciple of Jesus, wrote about the birth of Jesus Christ, namely, about that Christmas event.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full

of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ **Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.** (John 1:14-16)

This world was created by the word of God. John said that the same word became flesh, Jesus Christ, and dwelled among us.

John had spent three years and a half living and working with Jesus. During his close encounter of Jesus, John had witnessed the glory of son of God in Jesus. John also said that God's grace was with Jesus abundantly and we are also given this grace.

Some of you might have a friend with whom you had spent 3 years in a baseball team at school. Or you might have worked closely with a friend at your office. You know such people intimately. But, no one would say about another person: "He revealed the glory of God and was filled with grace and truth. I have benefitted greatly from the blessings he generously provided to me." These words John expressed were about someone who was far superior to ordinary human.

We could try to understand David's words "My cup overflows" in our daily life setting. In Japan, there are small drinking pubs with red lantern hanging at the entrance that are frequented by working class people. When a customer orders sake, the bartender produces a cup and pours sake until the cup begins to overflow. Imagine the customer at such a time. His eyes would be glued to the sake being poured. He can hardly wait for his chance to drink up the sake. He is filled with excitement and expectation. Perhaps his day was difficult. But, he can forget everything at that time and his eyes would be glued to the sake overflowing from the cup.

Of course, the grace of Jesus Christ is not sake. It is not a momentary joy, either. But, it is a great joy to see that the grace of Jesus is being poured generously to us. This is a great source of happiness. Although we cannot see the grace with our naked eyes, David wrote that the grace is being poured into our cup and it is overflowing. But, are we aware of this joyful fact?

The second point is to become aware that the overflowing grace is being given to us.

Be aware that overflowing grace is given to us

There is no question that God’s grace is poured upon us. No one can doubt this fact. God continues to pour his overflowing grace to us. If so, an important question for us is: Are we aware of that overflowing grace or not?

We are dissatisfied and unhappy because we feel that we are not as rich as other people, we are treated unfairly, and so forth. We fail to realize that we have many things we should be grateful about. We are so preoccupied with our dissatisfaction and unhappiness that we often forget to be thankful. God provides us with overflowing grace. But we fail to take time to acknowledge that. As long as we harbor such negative feelings as dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and grudge, we can never find a happy life. Perhaps we all know that. And that is why we continue to try to get rid of such negativity from our mind. But, it is very difficult. Everything we see and hear trigger such negative feeling again and again.

So, are we predestined to carry on such hopeless life? Is there a way to get out of that vicious cycle? But, when we look up to God, we realize that God is pouring his overflowing grace for us. Our cup is overflowing with grace from God. We must turn our eyes to the grace of God that is overflowing in front of our eyes.

We have received our life from God, and we are given this chance to live our life on this earth. Of course, everyone lives a different life. Perhaps such difference comes from our circumstances, up-bringing, and different experiences. All of these factors influence and color our life.

But, the greatest influencing factor in our life is not any traumatic experience or big decisions. The greatest change comes when we realize God’s grace is poured on us. There is no need to work long hours to earn that grace or to take a special lecture.

The life of apostle Paul was full of tribulations. What he said and wrote in the Bible comes from his personal experience and insight obtained through his hard life. He wrote about numerous hardships he faced on behalf of Christ. To ordinary people, such hardship could have caused unhappiness, grudge and complaints. But, he was not preoccupied with hardships he had undergone. Rather, his eyes were focused on the richness of the grace of God.

He praised the overflowing grace using such words as "always", "whenever", "overwhelming", "far above everything", and "beyond measure." Paul felt that he was truly blessed. To Paul, his personal frustration, grudge, and hardship were nothing compared to overwhelming grace from God. It was as if he could see nothing but the overflowing grace.

We tend to wish and hope that "only if I had that", or "only if the situation were different". But, we must free ourselves from such binds. We must learn to focus our eyes on the grace of God. As long as we keep saying "if only so", or "if only I had that", there is no end. As soon as we have one wish granted, we immediately feel frustrated that we do not have that other thing.

But, when we realize and acknowledge that God is providing us with overwhelming grace, such negative thoughts would be blown away. I am not talking about day-dreaming, or fantasizing. I am talking about realizing that God is truly providing us with overflowing grace.

The third point is "our needs are filled."

Our needs are filled

The Apostle Paul said in chapter 4 of his letter to Philippians:

¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
(Philippians 4:19-20)

When God pours his grace, he fills our cup of needs with glorious wealth that God possesses. That is why Paul said: "My God will meet all our needs according to the riches of his glory in Jesus Christ." It is said that an average

credit card loan per household in USA amounts to several thousands of dollars. Credit cards allow us to fill our needs even when we do not have any money. But, if we spend beyond our means, we are risking bankruptcy.

When we make purchases, we must ask one key question. We must ask if what we are trying to buy is what we want or what we need. Paul said that God will meet all our needs. He did not say that God will give us all we want. We must understand this distinction.

When we look back at our life, we clearly see that God did not provide us with all we wanted. That is true. But, it is also true that God had provided us with all we needed.

This word “need” carries deep meaning. Some of the times, this “need” challenges our decision. We say that if we love our children, we should let the children leave parents and take on a journey of their own. This is a need. We hope that such a journey children take would be enjoyable and safe. But, journeys are bound to run into unexpected situations. We are told that such experience is needed for our growing children.

God will fill all our needs. When we realize that fact, our life would change completely.

Lastly, let me talk about making a room for receiving grace.

Making a room for receiving grace

I have one favorite hamburger restaurant. They have a hidden menu. I am talking about items that are not on the ordinary menu. If you know this hidden menu, you can order items that are not listed on the ordinary menu.

By the way, did you know that there is a hidden menu of our life? Many of us are unaware of its existence. Such menu is usually hidden from our eyes. This morning, I would like to talk about this special hidden menu of life. This menu says that those who give generously would be given generously. Solomon, who lived over 3000 years ago knew about this hidden menu. He wrote:

²⁴ One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. ²⁵ A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. (Proverbs 11:24-25)

Jesus Christ concurred with Solomon and said:

³⁸ “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6:38)

In addition to Solomon and Jesus Christ, Paul also was aware of this hidden menu and wrote: **⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (II Corinthians 9:6-8)**

Paul said “remember this”. He was speaking from his personal experience. If you look at only the ordinary menu, you cannot find this way of thinking. But, the words of Solomon and Jesus must have caused Paul to look carefully at the truth. He found the answer in his personal experience. He understood the hidden menu. That is why he said: **“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”**

The natural world is regulated by its basic principle. This rules the natural environment. Such principle allows the vegetation and the animal kingdoms to coexist. In the nature, the living would die, and provides source for other life. Other living creatures obtain life from the dead. This is the rule of the nature. Our nature cannot exist without such rule. There is a basic principle in our human life, too. Jesus speaks about it this way:

²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:24)

This rule applies to all vegetation producing seeds. For a new life to spring out from the seed, that seed has to die. But, with the death of the seed, a new life shoots out, and produces fruit. This is the only way to bear fruit. The same principle applies to human. Jesus is talking about this basic principle. He says that, instead of receiving, we should give up our life for God so that an amazing fruit can come into existence.

When we say that our cup overflows, we are saying the grace is poured to us limitlessly. This implies, however, that more would be poured only if we let go what we have. In other words, for our cup to overflow, that cup has to be empty to accept the grace.

At our church lunch, some kind members would come and offer to pour tea into my cup. This conversation goes like this. "Would like more tea?" "Thank you. But I still have some tea in my cup." If some tea is still left in the cup, there is no room to receive more tea even when offered.

If we are holding on to something in our hands, we cannot hold any other things. But, when we let go the thing in the hands, a new room is created to receive new things. When we open our hands, the grace from God will fill our hands. Jesus said that God will pour his grace generously until it overflows our hands.

Are we going to live our life on this earth without changing from the seed state? The seed will not even hit the ground and will be forgotten and remain out of sight until it rots away.

Try this experiment this afternoon. Try to maintain tight grip of your hands until evening. It would be hard. You will tire out soon. Perhaps our feeling of void and fatigue are caused because we have continued to keep tight grip of our hands. Our hands are made to open so that we can receive the overflowing blessing from God. If you keep your hands tightly closed, how can God provide his blessing to you?

This morning, we have learned an important lesson from the Bible. God has been pouring out overflowing grace to us. But, many of us are not aware of that. When we realize that we are given God's grace, our heart will be filled with joy and grateful feeling. When we find out that God is filling all of our

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needs, our heart will be filled with joy and thankfulness. When we let go of things we possess and freely give, God will bless us with even more grace.

When we learn about this hidden menu and experience the blessing God provides us, we will be able to see that God indeed fills our needs with overflowing blessing. The life filled with God’s blessing is within our reach. It has always been placed in front of our eyes.

Let us pray.

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