

**“Nevertheless”, Matthew 21:23-32 (09/27/20)**

**(Slide 1)** Some of you may know that my wife (Pastor Ran) and I worked at the same place having the same job title – co-pastor at a previous church. Since both of us started to work full time, we discussed about how we could divide the house chores wisely. After a long conversation, we reached a conclusion. Pastor Ran is responsible for cooking, and I would take on all the others. How does that sound? Pastor Ran thinks it is a fair and wise decision, because cooking requires a lot of creativity, and a creative job is very stressful, demanding a lot of effort. It was the time before Caleb was born, our division of house chores seemed ok. I was not much satisfied with my responsibilities but decided to accept them because pastor Ran was happy with cooking. However, as one little troublemaker came out, every situation has changed. My amount of work has increased a lot. More dishes to wash, including countless baby stuff - baby bottles, teething toys, pacifiers, etc. and more laundry, including baby clothes and blankets. As I took on more chores to do, I changed my mind. I was no longer satisfied with my jobs. I used to meet Pastor Ran’s request as soon as possible, but now when she asks for me to do something, I do not do it right away, though I say, “OK I will.” If she asks me again, I say, “I told you, I will”, but I just wanted to postpone it again and again. Even nowadays, when she asks me to do something, sometimes I even say, “No, I don’t want to do it”, but then, I changes my mind, and do what she asked me to do.

**(Slide 2)** Then pastor Ran reminds me of two bible verses to comfort me. Psalm 126:5-6 says “Let those who plant with tears reap the harvest with joyful shouts. Let those who go out, crying and carrying their seed, come home with joyful shouts, carrying bales of grain!” And Romans 8:18 “I believe that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us.” Pastor Ran said, cheer up Kook Ho, and don’t be so sad, as Caleb grows, he will help you and take over your chores. Then I said, that is exactly what I hope for! Now, I am so happy to wait for my second baby. I know it is God’s blessing and a parents’ joy to have a new baby, but I also have mixed feelings, including being kind of afraid. As I mentioned before, we not only had some serious medical issues during Caleb’s delivery but also anxiety about taking over my chores after having a new addition. For this reason, I am getting more and more grey hairs about

many worries. Going back to 3 years ago and no sleep, tremendous house works, living in chaos, etc. Please, pray for your pastor and our family. Honestly, we as the Christians really appreciate your prayers and we strongly believe that it supports us a lot, especially overflowing & renewing our souls from uncertainties and tiredness.

**(Slide 3)** Today's gospel scripture seems to talk about two irrelevant stories, but we can understand these two stories in terms of acknowledging the authority of Jesus. The first one is directly questioning the authority of Jesus. Jesus asked Jewish leaders, who reacted negatively to both John and Jesus, "Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" Whichever they choose, it meant either they accepted John as a prophet or they believed Jesus, so they just answered, "We do not know."

From this, I was thinking, what were they really afraid of? Although they knew the correct answer, they seemed to refuse to accept it, because then they should reflect their belief by deeds. And Jesus talked about two sons who don't obey the authority of their father. When a father asked his two sons to go and work in the vineyard, the first son answered, "I will not", but later he went, and the second son answered, "I will", but he didn't. This parable is not praising anyone, because neither of them brought full joy to his father. Therefore, both two sons cannot be a perfect model of obedience. Nevertheless, Jesus recognized the first son, because he obeyed his father in the end. Indeed, the first son knew what he had to do, and he followed it after all.

**(Slide 4)** Actually, this parable was directed at Jewish leaders. Although they insisted that they always follow God and the Pentateuch (teaching of Moses), in fact they did not obey God. As they strongly opposed Jesus, they did not listen to the message of John the Baptist. They were just satisfied with their own righteousness, paying no attention to the truth. However, the tax collectors and the prostitutes were not asserting their own righteousness but believing Jesus Christ. Since they knew they desperately needed the grace of God, they opened their hearts toward God's grace. From Jewish leaders, we find many of today's Christians who identify themselves as Christians but do not worship, attend service, or love. They just think that their baptism, their confirmation, and their vows to God made them Christians. However, such

attitudes do not bring any joy to God. If they truly believe that baptism is God's work and came from heaven, they should prove their belief through not only their words but also their deeds.

**(Slide 5)** As James 2:17 said, "Faith is dead when it doesn't result in faithful activity." Look back on our life. Many times, we made our faith dead in various ways. Even though we made a lot of promises and confessions in front of Jesus, we did not actually live them out. We need to remember that no one can make their faith alive only through verbal pledges or confession. No action means no faith. Sometimes, life brings us into a problematic situation that is difficult to understand and accept. Even Jesus had a matter that he wanted to avoid, so he prayed to God, asking, "Let this cup pass from me." Nevertheless, when Jesus made it through by faith, he could rejoice over the victory. There is saying that "The one trying to wear the crown, withstand the weight"

Some weeks ago, I shared about the weight of being a parent. Also, sometimes I think being Christians has a lot of weight to bear, because in the true sense of the word, the title of Christian is not just given from baptism, confirmation, or membership vows. As Christians, each of us may be struggling with one's own challenges. What makes you feel it is difficult to live as Christians? For some people, attending Sunday service is quite a challenge. For them, Sunday is the only day to rest or enjoy personal interests. And to be involved in service is a challenge for some people, because they might not have enough time and energy. Also, giving a tithe is a challenge for some people because it could be too much for them or they cannot afford it. And some others struggle for some other reasons. So, they think if I don't have anything else to do on Sunday, if I have more time and energy, or if I have more money, I will do it. But, do we really know when that is? However, some people nevertheless just do it by faith. Sometimes they do it with sighs and tears, but then they see God who works over the situation. When we follow it by faith, the grace of God brings us a full joy of victory.

**(Slide 6)** Next Sunday is World Communion Sunday. World Communion Sunday was started in 1940 as a Presbyterian-led initiative of the Federal Council of Churches toward ecumenical celebration of Communion.

At that time, most U.S Churches celebrated Communion infrequently and rarely on the same schedule. The founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, addressed “Holy Communion” as a means of grace, which means communion can be a channel of experiencing God’s grace. So, he recommended us to partake in it as often as we can.

**(Slide 7)** For celebrating this special day, we are going to have a special type of worship, called Worship on Wheels at west church parking lot. I know there are many people who want to come back to the church worship service in-person, but they couldn’t because of safety issue. It is a great opportunity to you because there will be no safety issue during Worship on Wheels. The station will be prepared by the entrance of the handicapped door and you can see worship leaders through your windshield and listen the worship service through FM radio in your car. Because of safety issues, we strongly recommend you stay in your car, not at the church yard with a lawn chair. Also, ushers will provide a pre-packaged of worship service which includes communion cups, bulletins and the pastor’s sermon. Even though we will stay at each car and don’t have opportunity to talk and chat each other, it will make you feel as one church when we worship together at same place. I am convinced that we will able to feel the full Spirit of God through the worship service. Come and join and let’s see how the Spirit of God is working and being with us during the service. Let’s prepare this special worship service with prayers and partake in the Lord’s table for celebrating the World Communion Sunday next week.

**(Slide 8)** Let’s wrap up today’s message and while remembering today’s sermon title, Nevertheless. I hope and pray that you all decide to admit and accept the authority of Jesus and his lordship again or for the first time in your life. And listen to him. Grab tightly what he said to you today. Make him a top priority of your life. When you have Jesus as top priority in your heart and mind, you can truly follow and obey him. It is not easy and comfortable, but nevertheless when you start it, you can begin your true worship not only here in this place, but also in your life. Remember, the people who nevertheless believe it, nevertheless follow it, nevertheless do it, will go into the kingdom of God.

Praise God. Amen!