

Spiritual Resolution

Renew Our Foundation

Jan. 8th, 2011

Psalms 29:3-9

Mark 1:4-11

1. Strong Foundation

How is everyone today? Are you happy in the New Year?

I am happy today and I am sure that I will be happy for a month. One pastor said that people are happy usually for a week when they buy a new car, and people are happy for a month when they buy a new house. This is a key for my new house. It is the first house that I have bought in my life, and I am happy and I will be happy for at least a month.

During the process of buying the house, I learned one thing. Since I had a government loan to buy the house, it was required to have a termite inspection. An inspector crawled under the house and checked the foundation. He determined that the



foundation was free of termites. Otherwise, when the termite breaks down the foundation, the house will collapse. Regardless how expensive or how well restored the house is, if the foundation is not strong, the house cannot stand long.

The Bible also stresses the importance of the foundation. Matthew 7:24 says that a wise man builds a house on a rock, but a foolish man builds his house on sand. When we build a building, we'd like to believe that the ground is stable enough. If not, we are surprised and scared when the house starts shaking.

This video shows how tragic it is when the grounds start shaking and sinking.

(Video Clip: Sinkholes.)

It is scary to see that many buildings were collapsing because the grounds were shaking. We all want to build our houses on a strong foundation. I wish that your house has a strong foundation.

2. Water Foundation



Paul Tillich (1886-1965) was a famous theologian and preacher. His famous sermon was "The Shaking of the Foundations." He experienced the First World War and the Second World War, and he saw that Christianity, the foundation of western society, was shaking. Christianity in Europe was shaking after the two World Wars, and Christianity in America began to shake in the 1970s, after the Vietnam War. The American society began to move from a Modern Society to a Post-modern Society.

This rock symbolizes a strong foundation, faithfulness and stableness. This rock also symbolizes a Modern Society. In a Modern Society, it is clear what is good or evil and what is black or white. There is no gray area. In a Modern Society, Christians build their faith on unshakable foundations, which has "Doctrines". The doctrines say who is orthodox or heretic.

But in a Post-modern society, good and evil depend on where or how you look. There are many gray areas between black and white.

In Korea, Christians do not smoke or drink. Smoking or Drinking is against the virtue of Christians. When I came to America in 1994, I was shocked that even Pastors drank. I might accuse American Pastors as being corrupted and keep what I believed or I had to reevaluate what I believed and try to rebuild my faith. I loved the "open mind". Each time, when I see Christians or non-Christians from different cultures and different religions, I had to reevaluate what I believed and rebuild my faith.

Then I learned that our foundation is not like a rock anymore. Our foundation is like water. In the postmodern society, we live on the water. When there is wind, there is wave. Our foundation is shaking. What we need is to keep our balance on the shaking water. The way to keep our balance is through "Spiritual Sensitivity", which means tuning with God. When I play my guitar, I tune the guitar with a tuner. After a few days, when I play the guitar again, I have to tune again. Tuning is not an onetime thing. I have to tune each time when I play. In the postmodern society, what we need is to keep in tune with God continuously.

3. The voice of the Lord

Psalm 29 is traditionally categorized as an enthronement psalm. It is a hymn that praises God, who is powerful and almighty, and there is no other God. The phrase "The voice of the Lord" occurred seven times, because 'Seven' means fullness or completion.



Psalm 29:3 says "The voice of the Lord is over the waters." The waters symbolize the chaos before the creation. It also symbolizes the chaotic situation when the Israelites met the native gods in Canaan. When the Israelites faced different cultures, different religions and different gods, their faith was shaken. But they confessed that "the voice of the Lord is over the waters." Yahweh is the only God, the true God who guides them through the chaotic situation.

Mark 1:5 says this about 'water'. John the Baptist asked the Israelites to come to the Jordan River and be baptized for a new beginning. By going under the water and coming out, they confessed their sins and made a spiritual resolution for a new life.

My family loves to watch a Television program called, "One Night Two Days". It is a Korean reality show. Five members go to the many different places in Korea for one night and two days' camping. The first week of January, which is in the cold of winter, they usually go to a river, break the ice, and jump into the water. As they come out of the water, they shout their New Year's resolutions. I was so impressed by their determination and their resolution. Because of their determination, their program became so successful. Then I asked myself, "Do I have such strong determination for Jesus Christ?"

Mark 1:1 says "The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ," and the first thing that Jesus did was to jump under the water and come out. When Jesus showed his determination for the mission given by God, the voice of the Lord from the heaven said, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

We do not know if the River water was cold or not. We do not know if it was the new year or not. But what we do know from the Bible was that Jesus began his mission by showing his determination at the Jordan River. As we begin the New Year of 2012, I believe that we need to make a Spiritual resolution for our own mission.

4. Church Foundation

OK, then what is our mission? Our mission statement is on the bulletin.

“We are welcoming People to Love God, Grow Spiritually and Serve the Community.”

This is made out of the “Be, See, Do” survey that we had last year. I discussed this at small group meetings as well. This is also a summary of our vision statement. Last year, we shared our vision statement which was created in 2001.

Our vision statement is “As a result of God’s grace, **Portola United Methodist Church** strives to **G**lorify God through Worship, **R**eveal Christ’ life through Discipleship, **A**cept people through Fellowship, **C**elebrate faith through Evangelism, and **E**xtend God’s love through Ministry.”

From the vision statement, we made a ministry building. It has five elements: fellowship, worship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism. This is our ministry blueprint. We invite people to Love God in worship, grow spiritually in discipleship and serve the community in ministry.



In the New Year, people make resolutions. And we know that a resolution is not about planning, it is about practicing. Our ministry blueprint is not for displaying, but for our spiritual practicing.

Let’s practice “Fellowship” first. Fellowship is the foundation of ministry building, because through fellowship we talk, share and build a relationship. It is a beginning of a relationship and caring. There are many fellowships, but we have one main fellowship, which is after the service.

For practicing fellowship, I suggest two things.

1. Let’s join the preparation of fellowship. Let’s take a turn on each one’s birthday, and prepare the fellowship snacks. – For detail, see today’s Newsletter.
2. Let’s stay and talk with others. Most of you, I see one time a week. Rather than quickly leaving after the service, let’s stay and talk with others. Also invite people to stay for a coffee and conversation.

5. Spiritual Foundation

We would like to build our life and our faith on a rock, a firm foundation. But in reality, we recognize that our foundations are shaking a lot. It seems our foundation is not a rock but water.

When we face a family, financial or physical problem, we feel that our ground is shaking. It is like a water wave coming to us and shaking our life.

But if we stay together, we find that it is easier to get through the crisis.

When our ground is shaking, we need stronger fellowship with our brothers and sisters, and stronger fellowship with God.

Over the shaking water, the voice of the Lord says to us, "You are my Son and my daughter who I love." God will be with you all the time.

