

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

Text: Acts 9:36-43; Psalm 23

Introduction

Let me start my sermon today by asking: “How do you feel about the New Pope?” I am not talking about it in terms of theology. But interestingly, it becomes Philly Pride! Just because the new Pope is an alumnus of Villanova university, which is my husband's school, this New Pope is suddenly claimed as Philly's Pope.

I think it's a Philly thing that if there is a good one that comes from the Philly area, we are very proud of it. Philly people did not waste time; within hours of the announcement of the new pope, there was a big billboard in the highway that said: “From mainline to divine line.” We never boast about Kensington street to others. But the news of the new Pope having studied in Greater Philly is certainly something to be proud of and announced.

This situation is one of the funny and interesting examples of deeper reality of human beings: We want to show people, to show the world that *we have something*.

Well, the reality is that we *live* in a world that makes us compete to show that we have something. We want to tell people so bad that *we are special, we are different* than others, *we are more* than others. We want to show that we are related to that famous person. We want people to see that we are well-off, or we want others to know that we are educated people, alumni of one of the Ivy League universities or working in the big company. So that way, people may see, recognize us and treat us special.

We forget that when we pursue what the world loves and recognizes, we are being distracted from what God actually deeply loves.

A self-centered life is the opposite of what Christ has enlived, which is a life of love, humility, and compassion towards others. And, we who call ourselves Christians should know His teachings and follow them.

TEXTS

The story of Dorcas in the Bible is not long, but Dorcas was a special disciple. She is the only woman in the Bible who is specifically called a “disciple”.

It is true, she was just an ordinary woman. Not a great preacher or teacher like Peter, John, and the other disciples of Jesus, nor an educated man like Paul. Or someone who had a certain power in society. No, she wasn't. She was just an ordinary woman, who had sewing skills that were also normal for most women at that time.

But there was one thing that made Dorcas known as a disciple of Jesus, which was because she lived in love and compassion with those around her who were in need. She was always doing good and helping the poor.

She lived in the city of Joppa , a port city where there were many widows who had lost their husbands to shipwreck and drowning. These widows had no jobs to sustain their lives. They are a minority that not many people want to help or even consider them important.

But Dorcas chose to live close to them, a minority that people didn't even notice and consider important at the time. She chose to serve them, spending her time not to build relationships with socialites or even for herself, for self-love and self-reward, but to make clothes for the marginalized.

A job or lifestyle that is not everyone's dream. In the eyes of the world, she was nobody. She is nobody. But that is precisely why she is called a Disciple of Christ. Because she knows who her Shepherd is, and she follows His life.

OT Texts

When I think about the reason of why Dorcas chose a life of self-giving for others, even for people who were marginalized at the time, many questions come to my mind: did Dorcas not worry about her life? Well it's not mentioned whether she was married or not, but if she has a family, did she not think about her family's interests first rather than others? Didn't she have any dreams that she wanted to pursue in her life? To become the first women featured in the forbes magazine maybe? Didn't she feel lacking in her life?

I am reminded of Psalm 23 about the Lord being My shepherd.

David, the author of that psalm, was once in a situation where he was seen as a person who lacked, the poor. He was underestimated because he was young, inexperienced. He was once a fugitive, chased by people and lived in the shadow of death. But in the psalm, he says that when God is his shepherd, he lacks nothing. even in the shadow of death, he fears no danger because God is with him.

His enemies, saw him as poor, but he didn't feel that he was lacking because God was his Shepherd. Just like Dorcas, when she may only have enough food for herself, or enough money for her daily needs, she still gives to others. She doesn't feel deprived, because God is the shepherd who guides her life.

The world may see Dorcas' way of life as foolish and lacking, but that is because the world does not recognize Jesus's way of life.

Illustration

When I was still in Indonesia, one time, my parents and I took a taxi. Usually when I take a taxi, I rarely tip the driver, because giving tips is not our culture. But every time I take a taxi with my parents, they always give the driver more money as tips. One time I said to my dad, “Why do you give them more money? They already get enough from the price of the taxi itself.” Then my father said, “we just give them some amount of money, it won’t make us poor”.

Reflection

Until now, I try to hold what my father said to me: giving 5 dollars doesn’t make you broke; giving 2 hours listening to someone’s story doesn’t cost you the whole day; yielding to other drivers, doesn’t make you late, it just 2 seconds; saying “I forgive you” to someone who did you wrong, doesn’t kill you.

May we who say we are followers of Christ, hear, know and follow Him and live in love and compassion for others. As we’re kind to those around us, may they turn their thoughts to God and feel valued by Him.