

"Assumption of Moses"

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New Hope UC-York Pines UC
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Prayer for Illumination

Lord Jesus, your understanding of Scripture astonished and humbled all around you. Send your Spirit to illumine this Word that our understanding and wisdom may be increased. **Amen.**

Scripture Readings – Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, ² all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³ the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. ⁴ The LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there." ⁵ Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the LORD's command. ⁶ He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. ⁷ Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired, and his vigor had not abated. ⁸ The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

⁹ Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him, and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the LORD had commanded Moses. ¹⁰ Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹ He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, ¹² and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

< Children's Time >

Hello, my friends! I'd like to start with a fun quiz. I'm thinking of a name. People who are young at heart must assist them but not give the answer, okay? His name has 9 letters. Can you guess who it is? I'll give you one chance to guess a letter from the alphabet. Sean. Guess an alphabet letter. Any help from the congregation? In the Bible, Jesus called his name when he was sitting on a tree, looking at Jesus. He was rich and had a big party for Jesus, inviting neighbours. He repented his wrongdoing and paid back seven times to the people to whom he made mistakes. Jesus declared that God's salvation came to his house on that day! What is his name? Right! His name is Zacchaeus. He was a tax collector serving the Roman Empire; everyone didn't like him because he had collected more money than he was supposed to. He was not a good man. But you know what? When Jesus came to his town, Jesus started a conversation. We usually start a conversation with someone whom we don't know by asking for their basic information, like, "What is your name?", "Where do you live", "What is your job?" or "What do you do in your spare time?," right? However, the first words from Jesus to Zacchaeus were not "What is your name?" When Jesus saw him for the first time, the first words from Jesus to Zacchaeus was; "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." Isn't it amazing? How did Jesus know his name? And how could Jesus say, "I must stay at your house now" at the first encounter? Can you say to a person whom you do not know "I must stay at your house today"? We can't imagine or fully understand the conversation. And yet, one thing I'd like to mention: Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name and knew what Zacchaeus needed. Zacchaeus wanted to show his sincere heart; Zacchaeus wanted to join in the saints of his ancestors and his people, Israelites. Jesus knew exactly what Zacchaeus wanted. And when Jesus opened the opportunity, he

responded properly. That's how Jesus declared that God's salvation came to his house on that day, and that he is also one of Israelites.

My friends, Jesus knows you personally. So, our faith is more than just a long-time-ago story or difficult regulations that are not involved with our lives. It's about your life; it's about God's guidance for you. Jesus is always calling you, and it could be you who sometimes ignores it by closing your eyes and ears. If Zacchaeus hadn't listened to Jesus, he would have failed to be with Jesus on that day.

So, my friends, open your eyes and ears to see and listen to Jesus' guidance in your life. God bless you all! Amen.

<Reflection>

Three days ago, my family adopted two cats. They are a mix of black and white colours. This is my first cat experience, so I am not sure whether this adoption would end with a happy story or not, but at least I am sure this adoption is bringing big changes in the ordinary lives of my family members. Before the two cats came to my house, they were just cats beyond the show window; however, once they came to our home, they were not just cats but Titan and Tie. They got their own names, and we all, including the cats, have started building relationships with and learning from each other.

While pondering this new change, a poem jumped out at me. This poem is very famous in Korean, titled Flower:

Flower

Kim Chun-soo

Before I called his name
He had been just
A little motion.

When I called his name
He came to me, and
Became a flower.

Just as I called his name,
Someone please call me a name
That suits this hue and scent of me.
To him, I want to go and
Become his Flower.

We all
Want to be something.

To me, You, and to you, I
Want to become an indelible glance.

Isn't it great? The most famous line is this: "When I called his name/ He came to me, and/ Became a flower."

Calling or knowing someone by name implies a special relationship. If you know someone by name, you have something to do with the person. If

you call or know someone by their social insurance number starting with 5, this must be an extraordinary, dry, and indifferent relationship with the person.

Our relationship with God must be this personal relationship that God calls us by our names. Zacchaeus in the New Testament intensifies the sense of personal relationship with the divinity. When he was dramatically confronted with Jesus, the Son of God, he instantly reacted. Everyone at the scene disliked Zacchaeus because he was a notorious tax collector. Jesus knew his sadness, despair, fear, anger, and hopes. Jesus knew every detail of his life; that's why Jesus called Zacchaeus by name. So when Jesus called him by name, he was touched and decided to invite his neighbours to a party at his house. And Jesus publicly announced, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham."¹ At the moment, Zacchaeus must've felt greatly relieved from Jesus' remarks that gave a sense of salvation and a sense of membership among Israelites.

In the passage today, Moses died on Mt. Nebo: Although he was not able to cross over to the Promised Land, God called him by name while he was alive. Yes, God personally called Moses by name. God had an intimate relationship with Moses in his public life for God. We may recall the conversation between God and Moses in his public life. Moses was afraid to come forward publicly to his people, God confirmed that God would be with him and says, "I know you by name." I know you by name; that sounds so sweet and sound. Actually, God's voice sounds somewhat strange because the impression of God's voice in the Old Testament in Genesis sounds powerful and authoritative. God created the

¹ Luke 19:9.

universe; God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden; and God's hands of salvation were mainly for the house of Jacob.

Yes, the God in the Old Testament is quite focused on the house of Jacob and the nation of Israel. That is an unshakable theme in the Old Testament. God calls the nation Israel, and God saves them. The calling and the salvation are about community.

Isaiah chapter 43 reads this;

But now thus says the Lord,

he who created you, O Jacob,

he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name; you are mine.²

God calls the house of Jacob and the nation of Israel. God is working with a collective group of people. The salvation of community and nation cannot be ignored in the Old Testament; however, we shouldn't forget as well that God is calling and working with persons who respond to God.

Let's suppose that if Moses didn't listen to God's call and if the great prophet Isaiah didn't respond to God's voice, then would God be able to work with them? Of course, God would proceed with other people in order to accomplish God's plan. And yet, I would like to focus on the calling at an individual level. If God's people didn't respond, didn't answer, or didn't take action, then they wouldn't have experienced God's power that may have poured through them.

² Isa.43:1.

How about us? How about you? You came here today to respond to God and to get spiritual renewal from the time of silence, proclamation, and reflection. And it is such a great moment of consolation when we are reminded that God knows us and calls us by our name.

In the worship service, we are being engaged with God personally. We are singing hymns to God both communally and personally. We are praying to God communally and yet personally. We are reflecting God's words altogether but actually personally. And it is our great joy that we are having a deeper relationship with God personally, sharing this joy collectively.

In life, we receive God's grace and build intimacy with God because God calls us personally by name. However, in the final phases of life before death, we may be seriously confronted with the question of the meaning of life, death, faith, and God. In the last moments of Moses's life, Moses knew he would die soon. He could've looked back on his life and questioned the fundamental questions: From where did we come, and where are we going? In a time of mixed feelings and memories, God led Moses and showed him the Promised Land. God confirmed to Moses that God's promises were kept. Moses must've felt relieved and praised God at the scene and closed his eyes peacefully. From where did we come and where are we going? The Bible tries to answer the question, and the churches must teach clearly: Death is not the end but a new start, coming closer to God. Jesus gives clearer answers: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."³

³ John 3:16.

Like Moses, Isaiah, and Zacchaeus, God calls us personally; Jesus is calling you personally. And each one of you possesses a meaningful purpose of God. And that will be known when you respond. God knows you by name and gives us grace in life and beyond death. Therefore, we have a daring hope to meet the saints, who crossed the Jordan River, and who are being embraced by Abraham, the ancestor of our faith.

Let us now take a moment and ponder the relationship with God and the true meaning of our life, death, and beyond death in God's plan. Let us pray silently.