

"A Subversive Love"

December 22, 2024
King City United Church
Rev. Padre Andrew K. Lee

Prayer for Illumination

O Mighty One, who scatters the proud and fills the hungry, by your Holy Spirit, let your word leap in us and bring to our yearning the joy that comes with new beginnings and renewed lives. **Amen.**

Scripture Reading:

Luke 1:47-55 with Refrain#1, VU 898

R: To God I lift my soul in praise, in God my saviour I rejoice.

My soul proclaims God's greatness.

My spirit rejoices in God my saviour.

For you have looked with favour on your lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed.

You have done great things for me, O Most Mighty.

Hallowed be your Name!

You have mercy on those who fear you,

From one generation to another. R

You took action with a strong arm.

You scattered the proud in their conceit.

You pulled the mighty from their thrones.

You raised the lowly.

You filled the hungry with good things.

You sent the rich away empty.

You come to the aid of your servant, Israel,

for you remembered your promise of mercy,

to our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah,

and to their children in every age. R

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

<Reflection>

On December 10th, the Nobel Prize committee announced the winners of the Nobel Prizes in 2024. John J. Hopfield and Geoffrey Hinton won in Physics for foundational discoveries and inventions that enable machine learning with artificial neural networks. They used physics to find patterns in information. In Chemistry, David Baker won for computational protein design and Demis Hassabis and John Jumper for protein structure prediction. They cracked the code for protein's complex structures. In the Physiology or Medicine category, Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun won for the discovery of microRNA in 1993, a new class of tiny RNA molecules that play a crucial role in post-transcriptional gene regulation. Nihon Hidankyo won the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again. The prize in Literature was awarded to the South Korean



author Han Kang for her intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life. She has a unique awareness of the connections between body and soul, the living and the dead, and in her poetic and experimental style, has become an innovator in contemporary prose.¹

Han Kang's most famous books are *We Do Not Depart* and *Here Comes a Boy*. Both have the background of massacres in modern Korean history. Particularly, *Here Comes a Boy* depicts the military violence in Kwang-ju in 1980 under martial law. Over 600 people died in the massacre in Kwangju, and South Koreans lost their human rights until the military dictatorship ended in 1987. Ironically, 45 years later, while the writer Han Kang was celebrating her

¹ <https://www.nobelprize.org/all-nobel-prizes-2024/>

Nobel Prize in Literature as the first Asian woman, the president of South Korea executed martial law, which was unlawful and unjust. At the moment of declaring martial law, civilians in Seoul rushed to the National Assembly building because President Yoon sent special troops to the National Assembly building to enforce the ban and to block lawmakers from getting inside the building for a quorum where they could have a vote. Special Forces and Police tried to stop the congress members' votes for nullifying the presidential martial law. The Members of Congress climbed over the wall to the Hall while about one thousand unarmed and middle-aged civilians bravely dragged down the armed soldiers. More than four special squads targeted the chairman, the vice chairman, and the two leaders of the major parties. The aides of the Members of Congress who were inside the building vigorously resisted the invading squads while the 190 Members of Congress unanimously voted for nullifying the martial law.



A 35 year old politician, named Ahn Gui-Ryong held the gun that aimed at her chest. This picture was chosen as “the Picture of the Year 2024” by BBC. I watched an interview with a middle-aged man who was accompanying his son. While they were wrestling with soldiers, the father said to his son, “Don’t look back and run away when you hear gunfire. I will rush to the entrance of the National Assembly building to fight, but you must survive.” Tension was unimaginably high. The civilians at the scene and the congress members recalled the tragedy of the 1980 Kwang-ju massacre, but they decided to literally throw themselves to protect democracy. Can you imagine that? Since then, 2 million people have been gathering for the demonstration in Seoul every day and night for 10 days. The main crowd is young women in

their 20s and 30s and middle-aged individuals. The demonstration became a



sharing of anger and later joy, with participants waving their flashlights and sticks. How could they change their anger to joy? Finally, Dec. 14th, President Yoon was officially impeached by Congress. It is such good news for Koreans and others worldwide, knowing that in the darkest of times, the darkness can be, paradoxically, the

sign of the new rising sun.

Let's shift gears to the story of Jesus 2000 years ago. Baby Jesus was born under the persecution of the Roman Empire. It was a period of heavy darkness for the colonized people. And their tremendous suffering cried out to heaven. Paradoxically, in the thick darkness, prophets saw the light, the light of hope, and declared, "The Lord is near." We hear this in the season of Advent. We are so familiar with that, and yet this was not just rhetoric but a faithful proclamation for their future. The prophets' confident declaration brought the Israelites hope and patience.

We also read Luke chapter 1; Mary says "My spirit rejoice in God, my saviour." We do not have any resistance to hear and understand her praise. However, have you imagine how miserable she was when she praised that? Her marital status, her pregnancy, and the military threats and the persecution by the Roman Empire can't be joyful conditions.

What about the Apostle Paul in the New Testament? It is remarkable when he says in Philippians; "Rejoice in the Lord always." because the resurrected Jesus is always with us. In this short declaration, one word doesn't seem to make sense: Always. How can we rejoice always? "Always"

is better used in scientific facts or perpetual observations, such as “The sun rises in the East.” Or we may use it when we repeatedly make similar or the same mistakes. When your husband forgets to fill the gas tank and your car stops on the street, you say, “You are *a/ways* doing this! Ugh!” We use the word “always” but rarely for rejoicing. Furthermore, it is very hard to use the word “always” to accurately describe human emotion, feeling, action, and reaction. How do you understand the Apostle Paul’s suggestion: “Rejoice in the Lord always”? Not just in metaphysical assumption but in actual reaction?

Rejoice?; when you wash your face, you don’t do “Rejoice!”; when you get a flu shot, you don’t do “Rejoice!”; when you do dishes or laundry, you don’t do “Rejoice!” do you? And even in hard times?

One thing I must share with you. When the Apostle Paul wrote this letter, he was persecuted, tortured, and put to jail. He was so vulnerable at the moment. And yet, in the worst situation we could imagine, he suggests “rejoice” to his friends in the Christian faith. He was in such a miserable situation, but he knew the final victory that surpasses any evil power. He foresees that while people only see their current suffering at stake. The Apostle Paul finalizes his suggestion: “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”² He never doubts the victory of God. Therefore, he invites us to give thanks to God and rejoice in everything. We wait for Jesus, the final victory, a perpetual hope, joy, and love. This complete divine victory declares the utter defeat of evil power.

Sisters, brothers, and friends! I hope you wait for Jesus rejoicing his love for us. I hope you foresee God’s final victory and rejoice. When the joy

² Philippians 4:6.

resides within you, within us, we can overcome our sorrow, our fear, and our pain. In the season of Advent, remember how Jesus comes to you, your family, and our church, and bear the joy and love. Be a person of joy and love in Christ. Rejoice with patience, love each other as we are beloved. The Messiah is on his way to you, to your family, and to this community now. Let us pray silently.