

# “A Tree Planted by the Stream”

Psalm 1:3

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by Senior Pastor Hong Poonghwa

## Psalm 1:3 (PowerPoint)

### Preface

Since the New Year’s Day service, we have shared the words of the theme scripture five times, and today is the sixth and last time.

Psalm 1 is a word that may be said to summarize the contents of the 66 books of the Bible, so the richness of the word itself is as if it were a wellspring of water the deeper you dig. However, I would like to leave Psalm 1 for today and return to Ephesians next week. I hope to continue sharing the important message of Psalm 1 from Ephesians and other biblical passages.

This morning, I would like to focus on the last part of the theme verse, “A trees planted by the stream”.

### Part One

As we have seen, in Psalm 1, the psalmist refers to those whose lives are nurtured in relationship with the Triune God and whose lives are nurtured by the Word of God as the blessed and righteous.

Such a person is likened to a “tree planted by the stream.

As I was pondering over this analogy of “a tree planted by the stream,” I realized that there is one significant characteristic of this tree.

It was “planted”.

When you think of trees, do you usually think of trees that grow naturally in forests, groves, or mountains, or do you think of trees that have been planted?

When I say the word “tree” vaguely, I think of a natural tree that grows wild in a forest, woodland, etc.

So when I read the words of Psalm 1, “A tree planted by the stream,” I thought of a tree growing naturally by the water or with its roots submerged in water, like a mangrove.

However, upon closer inspection, we realize that the tree is a “planted tree,” and that it was planted with intention, even specifying the location, “by the stream”. We realize that someone, with an intention, moved the tree from somewhere else and planted it there.

When we think about this expression “planted,” we realize that it corresponds to the core content of what the entire Bible is saying.

And we realize that David, the author of Psalm 1, expresses that core content with a richly scenic and easy-to-understand analogy.

The tree was not planted there by its own thought or power, but by someone else, with a purpose and intention.

This is precisely the gospel that the Bible speaks of.

To believe in the Lord Jesus and become a Christian who knows God, to be what Psalm 1 calls a blessed and righteous person, does not happen naturally. It is not something you strive for. Rather, it is the work of God’s salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, in whom God, the Loving God, who created heaven, earth, and all things, has purposed to do so.

It means that God the Holy Spirit planted each one of us in a good place, the banks of the stream, with a plan that is appropriate and unique to each one of us.

That is what has happened to us, and there are many more who are yet to come.

### **John 3:16 (PowerPoint)**

This is a famous Bible verse that is often displayed by athletes competing in the Olympics and other world-class sporting events.

This verse says, “Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus will not remain as chaff, but will become a tree planted by the stream.”

But it says, “The act of planting is done by God.”

The Bible is not a book that records man’s activities, but what God has done. It is not a book that records the efforts of people who wander from place to place in their search for God, but a book that records the opposite of that.

Each person does what is right and good in his own eyes, and where he is going astray, God is following behind him.

Just as God Himself descended into the Garden of Eden when the first man sinned and was perplexed in the Garden of Eden, God has always descended, followed, and pursued ever since.

And finally, in God’s only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, He descended in the most precious form, pursuing each and every one of us who have become lost.

How far did He come down and pursue us?

### Luke 15:3-10 (PowerPoint)

We do not become blessed, righteous, and Christian like the “tree planted by the stream” by our efforts, good deeds, and aspirations. God, in the Lord Jesus, pursued the sheep that had lost its way until it found or the silver coin that had been lost. Finally, He pursued us until He died on the cross of Mount Calvary.

God pursued a sheep like chaff blown away by the wind, or a drachma silver coin that had been lost and had to wander around in the darkness, and if He found it, He pursued it until He planted it by the stream, even if it meant death.

For those who did not know that they were chaff, lost sheep, or lost silver coins, He sacrificed himself to the point of death to reveal His love for us.

To transform us into blessed people, into the righteous, into trees planted by the stream, into Christians who know the love of the true God, this is God’s work of “planting,” and the grace of “being planted” has happened to us.

Jesus Christ is “the stream,” and to be connected to Him is to be “planted by the stream”.

### Part Two

Therefore, no one is born a Christian in this world.

No matter where you are born, whether you are born in a Christian country or not, whether your mother or father is a Christian or not, no one is born as a Christian.

Just because a person is born and raised in a Christian home does not mean that he or she is a born-again Christian at all.

That is exactly what the Bible says.

In Romans 3, which we looked at last week, it says, “There is none righteous, not one. There is no one who seeks God. All have gone away, and everyone has become useless.”

Even in Ephesians 2, it says, “You were dead in your transgressions and sins, and by birth you deserved the wrath of God.”

David, who composed Psalm 1, even confesses in Psalm 51, “I was not only born iniquitous, but sinful, and my mother carried me.”

Just as a naturally growing tree grows over time, so a person grows and grows, but not naturally, as the Bible teaches, as a righteous person, as a blessed person, as a Christian who knows God.

They must be planted.

The work of God, who lovingly used the Virgin Mary to send His only begotten Son Jesus to this earth from the eternal throne of glory, so that He would be born, molds us into Christians.

It is not our efforts, or our righteousness, or our justice, but the fact that God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to this earth that is the core and means of God's work of "planting".

It is not just anyone.

Even if He created Adam and sent him to this earth in the same way, he would have sinned in the same way and would not be able to take our place.

Only Jesus, the only holy and sinless One, who lived a perfect life with clear intention and will, and who was able to obey and keep all that the law of God required, could have done this. Only Jesus, whose death on Calvary's cross could take our place, could take us, born-again sinners, and plant us in God, the stream of life, and make us Christians.

In no other way can we human beings be righteous, pious, or righteous beings who are not chaff.

## **2 Corinthians 5:21 (PowerPoint)**

As it is written so.

Jesus had no sin, so He did not need to die, but He dared to die in order to make man a tree planted by the stream. Not only did He die, but He rose from the dead by the power of God, completely conquering death and hell, rendering them powerless, and tearing to shreds the eternal disease of death.

On the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after he was raised from the dead, taken up into heaven, and seated at the right hand of God the Father, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit of promise and descended into humanity. With that, Jesus accomplished the work of being planted by the stream, of being connected to the Lord Jesus, bringing all good results to those who believe and trust in him, the way of "I, God, know you" that will not perish in the face of God's judgment.

On that day of Pentecost, when the apostle Peter preached, the people were pricked in the heart and turned to Jesus' disciples and asked, "Brothers, what shall we do?" they asked. Peter replied, "Each of you repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift."

By "receiving the Holy Spirit," I mean that God plants us.

Peter continued, “Be saved from this crooked age,” and 3,000 people became Christians.

It is God who makes a person a Christian.

The Triune God has made us a tree that will flourish forever, to plant us out of the chaff that will be blown away by the winds of sin and crookedness of time, into Jesus, the One by the stream.

Thus, if a person is made a Christian, he or she will have nothing to boast about, for God has made all of it.

Because God has done it all, has He not?

As the Apostle Paul confesses, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10).”

Grace is something that we receive even though we do not deserve it at all, and that is called grace.

God has done everything and caused a drastic change in the human soul, an impossible grace.

And even now, He is working to make things happen to the souls of people who are the chaff, to plant them by the banks of the stream.

In Jesus Christ, we human beings become trees planted by the stream.

We are made Christians through God’s great work of planting and through the spiritual experience of being planted.

### Part Three

As I mentioned in my previous sermons, becoming a Christian is not something that we add to our existing image or to the state of being that we already possess and wear.

To become a Christian who knows God means that the Lord God is making us into an entirely new being.

It would mean that He would breathe new life into us and instill in us new principles, laws, and perspectives that would be so different from the way we had lived and seen before.

Christians are those who have been transformed from lifeless chaff, discarded as garbage, into trees planted along the banks of the stream of life.

God the Holy Spirit accomplishes this by dwelling in us.

God the Holy Spirit will enter, plant, and dwell in us, and conflicts, battles, and sufferings that we have never experienced before will begin to arise.

Until then, we will have conflicts, battles, and sufferings in our guilt, which will change from time to time, according to our feelings and moods, according to the eyes of others and society, according to our beliefs and our cultivated experience and education.

But these struggles, battles, and sufferings do not end in bitterness and emptiness, but lead us in divine reward, mercy, forgiveness, joy, gratitude, to a place of forgiveness and love for oneself and for others.

When the time comes, we will be made to bear such fruit.

### **Psalm 32:1-7, 10-11 (PowerPoint)**

If you have been transformed into a righteous person, a blessed person, a Christian who knows God, as verse 4 says, “The hand of God will be heavy upon me,” and you will be shown in your sinful state, but if you struggle, if you fight, but eventually surrender, bow down, do not fight back, and confess your sin and iniquity, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”. If we confess our sins and iniquities, He will forgive us, protect us, and grace will surround us and lead us to a place of joy and enjoyment.

By letting the words “I’m sorry” to others and “I’m sorry” to God out of our mouths, God forgives us and becomes a hiding place for us.

I am sure that some of you have replanted a tree, and it is a difficult task.

If it is a large tree, heavy machinery such as a jumbo will be necessary, and even a person will be needed.

It also involves hard work that may cause back pain.

First, you have to dig up the area around the tree you are replanting.

This is a trying time for the tree.

The tree is being dug up from a place where it had been reasonably settled, albeit to a better place.

Then, to plant the tree that was dug up, the ground on the side to be replanted is dug up this time, and then the tree is planted.

Once the tree is planted, we need to cover it with soil so that it will not fall over, and then harden the ground over it.

In the same way, the process of becoming a Christian and living as a Christian is not so easy.

When God the Holy Spirit is planted in us in Jesus Christ, and when we try to live according to Him, there will be things that happen that never happened before.

We may suddenly feel guilty about something we took for granted before, we may face opposition or hindrance from others, we may go through hardships given by Satan like Job, we may be thrown into a spiritual battle to quit believing in God, etc. It seems to me that there are times when we have to go through a difficult place as if we are planting a new tree.

But the Word of Psalm 1 promises.

“When the time comes, it will bear fruit; its leaves will not wither, and all that it does will prosper.”

And it is the Word of God, the very Spirit and life of God, that reminds us of this fact every day.

### Part Five

I myself have spent the past two months or so pondering the words of Psalm 1. Recently, I encountered a story in which the words of verse 3, “When the time comes, it will bear fruit,” came to me with such emotion that it seemed to well up from the center of my body, and tears came out with a whimper, sobbing and uttering “O Lord”.

Do you know the book “Chi-Sung, I love you,” which was published 21 years ago and became a bestseller, selling more than 500,000 copies in Japan and Korea combined?

A Japanese TV program even aired a VTR that reconstructed the tragic accident that the author, Miss. Lee Chi-seong, had experienced.

I once went to Yodobashi Church in Tokyo with the youth of Megumi Church to listen to a lecture by Mr. Chi-Sung.

About 25 years ago, Miss Lee Chi-seong was struck by a drunk driver, ignited by gasoline, and was rescued by his own brother when she was on fire. She suffered severe burns over 55% of his body, and was called a “monster” by a child, a word that could not be more hurtful to Chi-Sung, who was studying early childhood education at the time.

It was a miracle that she survived the accident, and her life was changed forever.

She was a Christian, so she wrote a book titled “Chi-sung, I Love You” based on her faith in Jesus.

I would like to refrain from going into the details of that book today, but last week, for the first time in nearly 20 years, I had the opportunity to learn about the current developments of this Ms. Lee Chi-Sung.

I have a mentor who was a mentor to me when I was in the U.S. and continues to send me essays written by him every week. Recently, he sent me a YouTube video of a conversation he had with Lee Chi-seong.

I learned about the recent situation of Miss Chi-seong through that program, and the words, “When the time comes, it will bear fruit,” were superimposed in my mind.

She has undergone more than 50 surgeries, including one that she says was “like hell,” to repair the skin that still sticks up from the burns, but in that video I saw her testimony of living with Jesus as a tree planted by the stream.

Twenty-three years ago, she quit the university she was attending due to serious burns she had sustained. 23 years later, by God’s grace, she came back as a teacher at the university she had resigned from, and now she is teaching welfare for the disabled to students at the university.

She received support from her church and other organizations and studied at an American university during that time, hoping that her existence would bring comfort and strength to as many people as possible and show the love of Jesus to them.

She earned two master’s degrees and a doctorate in the area of welfare for the disabled at UCLA, and after 23 years, she came back as a teacher to her alma mater, the university he had to leave even though he didn’t want to leave.

And since she is living in society as a person with disabilities herself, her students say, “I can understand what you are talking about because it is your own story, and it comes from your own experience, so I can understand it very well and learn a lot from it.”

Miss Chi-Sung went through a great trial of being “planted by the stream” and at the same time a great opportunity to live again in the Lord, and she has truly experienced not only the ultimate fruit in the Kingdom of Heaven, but also the fruit that can only be described as God’s work in her life here on earth. I was struck by the words of Psalm 1, which overlapped with the image of Miss Chi-seong, who was comforted and encouraged by the fruit, praising the Lord’s hand, rejoicing in herself, and pleasing others. And I remembered the immeasurable and inexpressible work of God, saying, “What an immense and inexpressible work He does in guiding those whom He loves!” And in my own life, I was able to look to the future and look forward to it again.

## Conclusion



Those whose reason for living is to be planted in Christ, to live because of Christ, to eat of Christ, to drink from the fountain of Christ, and to live by the breath of Christ, are promised of eternal fruitfulness: “For to live is Christ, and to die is also profit“, and at the same time, will be able to taste the fruit of this life of living, as it is appropriate at times.

For the life of those who live in Christ is not the life of man, but the life of God, the life as if “the leaf of the tree never withers”.

And so, in fact, I believe that we are being led to this place of worship as we are allowed to taste that life every day.

I believe that the Holy Spirit is doing His work in us to bring us from a place of chaff, where we were trying to get satisfaction from somewhere other than Jesus Christ, to a place where we are satisfied with Christ alone, with all of Christ.

Then we, too, should not give up on responding to that work.

Let's pray.

Benediction : Psalm 1:3