

## **“God’s Desire, the Prayer of the Lord Jesus”**

Proverbs 17:1; 15:17

Ezekiel 37:15–19

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**Proverbs 17:1; 15:17 (PowerPoint)**

**Ezekiel 37:15–19 (PowerPoint)**

### **Preface**

The Bible begins with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and the God who created all things in heaven and on earth is the Triune God: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The Bible, which speaks of itself as containing everything that we human beings need to know in the sight of God, tells us that the most outstanding attribute of God revealed in Scripture, which is the Word of God, is that He is the Triune God.

God is an “oneness,” a God who is love.

There are God the Father, Jesus the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each of the three is God; each exists as God. Yet they are not three independent Gods. Rather, the three are one God. The more we try to explain this with our words, our logic, and our very limited minds, the more inexplicable it becomes. This Triune God, who is love, cannot possibly be explained by our finite wisdom and knowledge.

This Triune, loving God created His creatures, and this created world as well, as a loving “oneness,” in which all things support one another, respect one another, and circulate with one another—created as something that naturally reveals and embodies what love is.

And the representative that most clearly expressed this oneness was the human being. Human beings—indeed, we humanity—were created by the Triune God as beings in the image of God, representing the oneness of heaven and earth.

That is why the very first words used in Scripture to describe the first humans, Adam and Eve, are: “the two shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

To the question, “What is man? What is a human being?” the Bible’s first answer is: “oneness.”

“Oneness” is the defining characteristic that describes what a human being is, and “oneness” is, I believe, the most important aspect of the image of God that God the Father, Jesus the Son, God the Holy Spirit—the Triune God—expects from us human beings.

### **Part One**

However, the first humans, Adam and Eve, destroyed that oneness.

Through their own mistaken choice, they broke the most important image of God that had been given to them and that they possessed.

As I shared in the New Year's Day service, the history of humanity after breaking the image of God as "oneness" came to be characterized above all by division and factionalism, scattering, discord, conflict, and disunity.

Human beings, who had been the representatives of the most important, essential, and defining characteristic of the created world God had made—namely, "oneness"—ceased to be representatives of oneness.

Instead, they became representatives of discord, conflict, mutual judgment, scattering, and division. While fully and abundantly displaying the very opposite of the most important image of God that God expected of them, they did not keep this posture confined to the human world alone. True to their role as representatives, they exerted great influence on the rest of creation and all things, producing a world of "eat or be eaten," survival of the fittest, destruction and being destroyed—a world that is as though humanity were tightening its own noose around its neck.

The existing created world could no longer remain a world of "oneness."

"This is my land up to here; this is my possession up to there"—as if it were the most natural thing in the world, we draw national borders, draw property lines, assert ownership rights, say, "From here to here is the human world; from here to here is the animal world," and while exploiting creation to the fullest when it suits us, we abuse it to the point of driving entire species to extinction. Even now, we continue to construct a world that has nothing to do with mutual support, mutual respect, or mutual circulation.

The Triune God, who did not regard such a situation as acceptable but was deeply grieved, took action to save human beings who had destroyed "oneness," and through saving humanity, to recreate once again the oneness of the created world.

Above all, in order to rescue human beings—who had departed from God, claimed to become like God themselves, fallen to the level of servants or tools of Satan, continually producing violence and corruption, and become sinners who kept generating discord rather than oneness—God placed His only begotten Son, Jesus, on the cross, and prepared the way for human beings to be born anew.

To those who confess of that cross, "This is for my sin," and acknowledge that they themselves are sinners before God, He grants every spiritual blessing, saying, "I will make them children of God in Christ Jesus." And He declares that "through their earnest, love-filled commitment to being one, God will in time reveal that He Himself will make all things one."

In order first to save human beings, who had destroyed the oneness of heaven and earth, and through that salvation to recreate the world in which creation—heaven and earth—is one, God placed His only Son Jesus on the cross and accomplished His work, intending to unite all things in heaven and on earth in Christ.

Shall we turn to Ephesians chapter 1?

This is a passage we studied before.

### **Ephesians 1:4–10 (PowerPoint)**

The salvation given to us through the Lord Jesus Christ is not something that ends with, “We are saved—finished.”

This present created world, which lost its oneness because of human sin, will one day reach its end, and all things in heaven and on earth will again be gathered together as one in Christ, as one in God. This is the mystery of God’s will, in which all things are made one in the Triune God. And the salvation of human beings—who had been the representatives of the oneness of heaven and earth in God’s creation—is the most important and absolutely indispensable condition for God to make all things one again.

Therefore, it is only natural that the final prayer prayed by Jesus Himself, who was placed on the cross, a prayer offered while His sweat fell like drops upon the ground, was this:

“That they may be one; that they too may be one, just as we—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are one.”

### **John 17:21–23 (PowerPoint)**

This was the final prayer of Jesus before He was crucified—the prayer He prayed in agony, with sweat falling to the ground.

“Just as God the Father, Jesus the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one, please make them one. Through their becoming one, just as we, the Triune God, are one, let the world come to believe in God. Reveal Your glory. Let Your love be made complete, and let Your love be known,” Jesus prayed. In other words, the purpose of Jesus’ redemptive work on the cross is that human beings, who represent all creation, may become one. And this oneness is something that must never be lacking—indeed, it is an absolutely necessary and indispensable condition for God to make all things one again.

## **Part Two**

For the theme verses of 2026, I chose Proverbs 17:1 and 15:17, and Ezekiel 37:19, and set the lyrics of the theme song as follows: “Better is a dry piece of bread with

peace, and loving one another, than a house full of feasting with strife. Behold, I will make them one in My hand.” As I reflected on why these words resonated so deeply within me, and whether choosing them as the theme verses truly accords with the will of the Lord, at some point—when exactly I cannot recall—the phrase “Make America Great Again” began to resound across the entire world, and I felt as though the very atmosphere of the world had somehow changed.

The words of Proverbs 17:1 and 15:17 were woven during the period in Israel’s history when the kingdom was at its greatest height—most prosperous, most wealthy, and most envied by the surrounding nations.

They are the words of God woven by King Solomon.

King Solomon was a man of such renowned wisdom and knowledge that his name even appears in the titles of television programs in Japan, a country that is not a Christian nation. He also experienced, without missing a single detail, every kind of pleasure and enjoyment that a human being could experience on this earth. From a worldly perspective, there could hardly be anyone more enviable than he.

He was a man who lacked nothing, a man who had everything, a man who possessed virtually everything that a human being could possibly possess.

And God permitted Solomon to live in such a way.

For what purpose?

So that Solomon himself would confess with his own mouth, and leave it written, that human joy—true human joy—is not found in the things of this world; and so that people all over the world would come to know the emptiness and vanity of living while envying such a way of life as his; so that his life might serve as the ultimate negative example.

I am convinced that Solomon truly was used by God, and that the wisdom given to him by God never departed from him, and therefore that he certainly went to heaven. Yet there are some who say, “After living such a self-indulgent life, there’s no way he could have gone to heaven.” That is how outrageous his lifestyle was.

And it is this Solomon who, based on everything he experienced by staking his entire life on it, wrote down these words of God—Proverbs 17:1 and 15:17.

**Proverbs 17:1 (PowerPoint)**

**Proverbs 15:17 (PowerPoint)**

And furthermore, verse 16:

**Proverbs 15:16 (PowerPoint)**

Solomon lived with a heart full of longing and envy, saying: “Rather than being in a house overflowing with feasting and filled with strife, it is more enviable to have a single piece of dry bread and live in peace”; “Rather than eating fattened cattle and hating

one another, it is more enviable to eat simple vegetables and love one another”;  
“Rather than having abundant treasures and living in chaos, it is more enviable to live  
fearing the LORD, while feeling contentment and gratitude with little.”  
And I believe that these proverbs are the words that were squeezed out of him by  
God—words that came forth from his mouth after living in deep emptiness.

They are words that strike at the core—words that strike at the conviction of what truly  
matters and what must be valued. But has there ever been a time, including our  
present age, when such core-striking words were placed first, treasured, and brought to  
the forefront of society?

“Even if we have to fight, we want to eat better meat—delicious meat whenever we  
want. So study hard, get rich, rise in status, become famous. Or better yet, don’t  
become famous—just quietly enjoy wealth for yourself alone. Trusting money is more  
reliable than trusting God. Trusting yourself is more reliable. And no matter what  
happens, we will never allow anyone to interfere with what we have gained by our own  
power.” In a world where everyone—from small children to grown adults—seems to live  
while holding such thoughts in their hearts, the words “Make America Great Again”  
sounded to me as though they were being proclaimed loudly to the entire world, without  
shame, even boldly as if they were justice—indeed, as if they were standing on God’s  
side of justice.

And responding to, welcoming, riding on, and rejoicing in those words that run counter  
to the Word of God, people in many countries began to say the same kinds of things:  
“Make Japan Great Again,” “Make China Great Again,” “Make Russia Great Again,”  
“Make Korea Great Again,” “Make Germany Great Again,” “Make Britain, England  
Great Again.” Hats were made, T-shirts were made, and books titled “Make ~ Great  
Again” were published in each country.

Even if it means hating one another, even if it means fighting, even if it means chaos—  
asserting one’s own righteousness is treated as justice. And here in Japan, words that  
seem not even to fear God, such as “Japanese First,” are now shouted openly.  
“So that Japanese people can obtain better feasts, so that Japanese people can eat  
tastier meat whenever they want, so that Japanese people can possess richer  
treasures”—it is as though people have brazenly declared, “Concern for our neighbors  
is outdated; let’s drive out such hypocritical things,” as if forgetting to fear God while  
living with the vision that the Triune God will once again make all things one, waiting for  
that fulfillment, and striving in the life and time given to us to become small instances of  
oneness.

In the New Year's Day service, I spoke about how it was unbearable pain for God—pain beyond measure—that the people of Israel, who were God's people, became divided, fought, and warred against one another. When we ask, "What is the most joyful thing for God, and what is the most sorrowful?"—and since the Bible calls the God we believe in "Father God"—when we ask, "What is the greatest joy for that Father as a father, and what is His greatest sorrow?" the answer becomes obvious at a glance. The greatest joy is when His children rejoice together and love one another. The greatest sorrow is when His children hurt one another. I imagined how heartbreaking it must be for Father God to see the attitude, "Regardless of my other brothers and sisters, as long as I—me—am great."

### **Part Three**

Once again, I apologize for speaking about my own family, but during this year-end and New Year period, my wife and I caught colds and were bedridden for about a week. In the midst of that, there was a time when both my wife and I were confined to bed, and my wife was unable to prepare dinner for our children. At that time, our eldest son, unable to bear seeing his younger brothers hungry, took them in his own car and went out, went to a restaurant, and treated his brothers to delicious hamburgers and pizza, using the money he himself had earned from his part-time job, and then came back home. It was, how shall I put it, deeply moving. We were overwhelmed with gratitude, and my wife and I quietly rejoiced together, saying, "As parents, there is nothing happier than this."

Also, after the New Year's Day service on January 1, we were supposed to visit my older brother's family in Tokyo, but neither my wife nor I were well enough to go. Then my brother called and said, "Your kids are looking forward to their New Year's gifts, right? I'll go to Tsuchiura, take your kids out, treat them to sushi, and give them their New Year's money. And on the way back, I'll bring sushi as a gift for the two of you as well." And he actually came all the way to Tsuchiura and did exactly that.

My brother is thirteen years older than I am, so perhaps to him I am somewhat like a son, and perhaps my children feel a bit like grandchildren to him. I was simply overwhelmed with apology and gratitude.

My father passed away twelve years ago, but I imagined how happy, joyful, and heartwarming it would have been for him to see such a situation of his children and grandchildren.

And I also imagined my mother in Korea, who feels lonely because she cannot see her children and grandchildren during the New Year—how, beyond that loneliness, this would have been something that warmed her heart, something joyful and delightful, something for which she would feel grateful as a parent.

I titled today's sermon "God's Desire, the Prayer of the Lord Jesus," because I believe that what God desires is precisely such scene among us human beings. I believe that Father God so deeply longs for, waits for, and rejoices in each of us His children being one with one another; that He looks upon with a smile our efforts to cherish being one while caring for one another. And I believe that this is also what Jesus had in mind, what He longed for, when He prayed while sweating drops like blood. That is why I chose the title, "God's Desire, the Prayer of the Lord Jesus."

### **Conclusion**

The act of love that we Christians, who know God's will and plan, that the community of believers should seek, pray for, and strive to live out—is this not to refuse to give up, to refuse to abandon, the effort to embody being one in the Lord?

Those who have not heard the New Year's Day sermon, I would be grateful if you would listen to it once. As I shared there, since the historical event of the coming of the Holy Spirit two thousand years ago, humanity—and especially Christians who believe in Jesus Christ—have been placed into a relationship of peace with the Lord God, and have been given the foundation by which conflicts between people, between ethnic groups, and between nations can be transformed into peace.

Those who confess Jesus Christ and have entered into a relationship of peace with God can no longer suppress the holy impulse that wells up within them—the desire to be peacemakers, to bring reconciliation, to be one, and to make oneness.

For the Holy Spirit, who guarantees that we have been made people who have peace with God through Christ and heirs of the kingdom of God in which all things will be gathered into one, dwells within us—within this very body.

Just as Jeremiah could not stop speaking the word of God despite his reluctance, fear, attempts at restraint, and endurance, so too Christians cannot suppress God's work of making all things one.

If we were able to suppress it, then perhaps we would need to doubt ourselves and pray to God, asking, "Do I truly have faith that seeks to obey God's word and God's Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit truly dwelling within me?"

Striving not to give up on being one in the Lord, seeking to embody it, requires humility; it demands self-denial; it calls us to live the narrow and difficult path of having the attitude of Jesus, who regarded others as more excellent than Himself.

But if that is God's will, we cannot abandon it.

For it is not only God's will; it is also because human beings are truly happy only when they live—or seek to live—according to God's will.

As we continue to sing the theme song throughout this year, I pray that we may be people of grace and people of peace, who examine the meaning of those words before the Lord.

Let us pray.

**Benediction:** Proverbs 17:1; 15:17