

† Pastor's Letter †

Dear Siblings in Christ,

I'd like to share with you my thoughts on some wordings that we use regularly during Sunday Worship Service. My desire is to make changes in these two wordings. One is in the Lord's Prayer and the other at the end of Scripture Reading. I've been thinking about this for a long time and had chances to talk about them with small group bible study groups. For all the guiding thoughts and theological understandings, I'd like to give credit to three books written by Rev. Adam Hamilton: "Making Sense of the Bible" (2014), "Half Truth" (2016), and "Doubt" (2023). I think it is time to change these wordings and remove a barrier that may cause some misunderstandings about God and the Bible. Here are they:

- (1) "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" in the Lord's Prayer will be changed to "***Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.***"

The reason for this change is that the current wording may imply that it is God who leads us into temptation. But the Bible tells us that God is not a tempter. Even though Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, it was not the Holy Spirit (or God) but Satan (devil, tempter, liar) who tempted Jesus after 40 days of fasting. James, Jesus' half-brother, said: "*No one, when tempted, should say, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted by evil and **he himself tempts no one.** But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it*" (James 1:13-14). It is a wrong understanding of God that He is the source of temptation, of trial or of hardship. Some Christians try to comfort those suffering/struggling by saying "God won't give you more than you can handle." Telling it to someone grieving the loss of a child can be incredibly insensitive and even hurtful. It implies that God intentionally caused the tragedy and is now testing their ability to cope. Such a notion can lead to feelings of anger, devastation, and even rejection of faith (see Chapter 3 of ***Half Truth***). God does not give us a disaster and later comfort or healing. Life happens. Nature brings disasters in its own cycle. Satan tempts us. Ill-minded or irresponsible people cause tragedies. When we are in trouble, however, our loving God never leaves us alone or let us down but always be there to help us come through it.

Catholic Church changed the wording into "do not let us fall into temptation but deliver us from evil" in 2017. But I think this wording still may imply that it is God who does let us fall into temptation. I prefer the new version suggested by the Upper Room Worship Book (2016) which is "***Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.***" This makes it clear that God is the Savior and Deliverer.

- (2) "This is the word of God for the people of God" at the end of each Scripture readings will be changed to "***This is the word of the Holy Scripture for the people of God.***"

The reason for this change is that the current wording implies that every word in the Bible is the word of God, even *literally*. In the Bible, there are passages reflecting the timeless will of God such as "Love your neighbor as yourself!" while some reflect God's will in a particular time but not for all time such as ritual laws of the Old Testament – no tattoo or no trimming beard (Lev 19:27-28). On the other hand, some others reflect the culture and historical circumstances in which they were written but never reflect God's timeless will such as slavery or ethnic cleansing through war or discriminatory remarks against some particular groups like women, children, the disabled, etc. Rev. Hamilton says, "Rather than attempting to justify such things, *we should loudly condemn these teachings and commands and make clear that this did not ever reflect the will of God*" (p.273, Making Sense of the Bible). (Continued on next page)

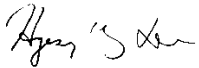
The Bible is the foundation of our faith, the guiding light on our feet and the means of saving grace. So, we will cherish, read and meditate on it as long as we live. That is why we read them during our worship service. We cannot proclaim however that they are the word of God *literally* after we read the passage about ethnic cleansing in the name of God. So, rather than we keep saying “This is the word of God for the people of God,” I’d like to suggest to say “***This is the word of the Holy Scripture for the people of God.***”

I am planning to change these wordings from Palm Sunday March 24th, since we need some time to let everybody know about these. I’d like to welcome your thoughts, feedback, or suggestions in the meantime.

“Lent is about Becoming, Doing, and Changing whatever it is that is blocking the fullness of life in us right now.

Lenten is a summons to life ANEW” (by Sister Joan Chittister)

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you!” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Hyesung Lee'.

Your Pastor, Hyesung Lee