

The Threefold Paradigm. (Lam. 3:22-33; 2Cor 8:1-9, 13-14; Mk 5:21-24, 35-43)

* Dear Christians, you are not alone in your journey heading toward the Promised Land. Even walking across mountains, valleys, canyons; boating across rivers, lakes, being in danger during the days and nights, (2Co 11:27), we are secure because, as I tell you, we are not alone. Jesus, the Son of the Almighty Father is our companion. His name is Love and Mercy and Peace; his love endures forever. This love caused him to become a Man and die on the cross. Christ's love caused him to rise from the dead and ascend to heaven. Christ's love sent forth the Holy Spirit upon believers. Last of all, Christ's love in us produces help to the needy and thanks to the Almighty.

* My dear Friends, each Sunday, upon hearing the truth, you shout with great joy after experiencing God's love through his forgiveness of your sins by means of grace and other mighty acts of Christ in your personal lives. You might remember, during my last sermon I asked you to imagine yourselves in the place of pilgrims who set sail toward the Promised Land. While we were half way through that cruise the windstorm came on us causing our boat to almost sink under the pressure of the swallowing waters. We were frightened since we had narrowly escaped the sinking of the boat. But in spite of our panic, we were delivered from the swallowing waters, and at sunrise we saw land. Then, experiencing the great joy of salvation, we stepped out of the boat with shouts of praise and adoration to Jesus Christ, our God.

* When I thought over the topic for this sermon I found that the three readings for today, first, tell us about the God's grace and second, about brotherhood among saints. More specifically, the two readings from (Lam 3:22-33 and Mark 5:21-24,35-43) tell us how much God loves his people and the reading from (2Cor 8:1-9, 13-14) tells how much people decide to offer God's love back. Actually, nobody can measure God's love; it is beyond words and understanding. But in spite of our incompetency, all benefits of this immeasurable love belong to Christians. In fact, many people like to receive but not everybody wants to give; I see here a problem, even among Christians. When we build our relations with God on the basis of '*giving- receiving*' we cannot avoid problems. On the other hand, the threefold paradigm, giving – receiving – giving, was designed by God from the beginning, and it is perfect.

* According to (Gen. 1), on the fourth day of creation two lights were made: the sun, to rule the day and the moon, to rule the night. Both lights were called the great lights by virtue of their importance. A matter of first importance, however, is that only the sun was designed as a generator of light. It continues to produce the giant amount of energy. Unlike the sun, the moon does not produce energy at all; it only reflects a little back, around 10% from what it receives. From this point we can assume that the moon functions as a giver of energy, as a night-light and as a navigator. Therefore, the communication between the two great lights was set into the threefold paradigm, *giving- receiving – giving*. The sun gives light and energizes the moon. The moon receives and it reflects certain amount back. This principal is universal, it is base upon God's designed order for creation, and it must be followed.

* Next to creation of the great lights God made a man and a woman after His own likeness, as ([Gen 1:26](#)) says. Many Bible commentaries point out that we will never be totally like God because he is our supreme Creator. But we do have the ability to reflect God's character in our love, patience, forgiveness, kindness, and faithfulness. So from this point of view Christians were made after God's image to be givers of kindness. Now, whoever has the Spirit is able not only soak up all kind of goodness, but also be able to contribute, share and care.

* As I told before there is a problem in giving after receiving even among Christians. Keeping in mind I have a confession. There was a time when I didn't know God. I remember myself as a self-centered person. I cared for my family as much as I could, but I didn't care for someone else even a little. Earning money for myself was a chief purpose of my life and not to spend my money for someone else was my principal. I dreamed to becoming a rich and independent person. The twofold paradigm, *give-receive*, was applicable to me, but it is not what God likes. I thank the Blessed Trinity for the work of restoration in me by this mighty acts of giving, giving, and giving! The Father showered upon me His love in Christ Jesus so abundantly that physically I could not soak up any more; my cap overflowed. From that point in my life God's love started flowing out of me and to my countrymen and their children and now to you my dear Friends, ([Joh 7:38](#)). Telling you about my transformation in general term it is not yet a colored picture, however, let me give you true story about my receiving God's love. There were also many other true stories in my life.

* I once experienced shocked fear and then overwhelming joy in just within one minute. This is not fiction, believe me, this is a real story. Actually, I risked my neck many times as when I served as a jet pilot in the Russian Air Force, but this accident was incredibly special. Imagine, after 15 seconds of swift bumper to bumper running, two fighter-bombers took off from an air base outside of the Mongolian city of Chaybolsan. While we were in the beginning of a climb, my jet was clipped by the jet of my wingman at around 1200 feet above the ground. Such a collision would usually cause the destruction of one or both planes and their pilots, fortunately that did not happen with my companion but it happened with me. My airplane spiraled downward and exploded on impact nine seconds after the collision. This delay afforded me the necessary five seconds to eject and be saved. Such an escape should not have been humanly possible because of the brief reaction time, the stress, and the overwhelming 9 G-force. It would take more than superman strength to maintain control. Significantly, after ejection from the spiraling airplane, the main parachute system malfunctioned. In short, possible causes of death came one after another. I appreciate the engineers who designed a duplicate parachute system as a matter of great importance. In a moment, the secondary mechanism removed the problem and my parachute opened. As if this were not miraculous enough, I escaped the huge fire ball on the ground with the help of a strong wind from the North. It drew my parachute away from the inferno. Great joy came to me when I found that I was alive and that none of my bones were broken. There were two interesting details seen after my surviving. The laces of my boots were torn into pieces, and the solid, non-removable tube of my oxygen mask

was cut off. So my five seconds anticipation of dying was replaced with the great joy of being alive. I was saved! In conclusion, the investigation panel reported that practically (from previous accidents) and theoretically I should have died. Later I understood it was the saving act of God! Surely through this act God demonstrated his love to me! Friends, this is not the end of my story. By many acts, including this one, God saved me from spiritual and physical death in order to make me a giver.

* Now, we come up with an idea of fellowship that critically based upon love among the members of One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. As it was mentioned before, the Epistle reading for today teaches how much God's love was offered back by Macedonians to their Friends in Jerusalem. Having been baptized, Macedonians experienced their salvation spiritually and physically. Being overwhelmed by the presence of God in their lives, those Christians, in turn, became the charitable givers. Through the apostle Paul it became known in Corinth. *We want you to know, brothers, about God's grace that was given to the churches of Macedonia. In spite of a terrible ordeal of suffering, their abundant joy, along with their deep poverty, has resulted in the abundance of their generosity. I can testify that by their own free will they have given to the utmost of their ability, yes, even beyond their ability, (2Co 8:1-3).* The Christians from Macedonia reflected Christ's sacrificial love in them in a very specific manner. The likeness of God as a giver evidently took place in Macedonians, it was shown in their reach and generous acts of giving, even in spite of their poverty, even in spite of harsh times, even giving more than 10%. *I love You, I love You and that You do know; But **how much** I love You, my actions will show.* By supporting God's flock in Jerusalem in times of severe famine, Macedonians saved many lives. That time their charity influenced many Christians in Corinthians and it continues to influence many Christians around the world including our church in Elizabeth. Beloved, God's love produces through you all kinds of goodness, I am witnessing. The acts of your charity show that you were restored after God's image as the givers of all kindness. By giving and sharing you support the fundamental principle by which the Church in Christ was started and by this principle it is still standing.

* Now focusing on Jesus' Galilean ministry we learned how many people experienced God's love through healing, protection and feeding. The Gospel lesson for this Sunday narrates the miracle provided by Jesus in raising the young girl from the dead. Her father, Jairus, a ruler of a synagogue, begged Jesus to come to his home to save his daughter from disease. Jesus did even much more, he brought the girl back to life and he restored her from the deadly disease. Reflecting upon Christ' love, Jairus' household filled up with shouts of great joy. Because of Christ' love the twelve apostles and their friends in Jerusalem also filled up with shouts of great joy; the same joy filled up the hearts of believers in Palestine and Macedonia, then in Corinth and so forth, around the world. Experiencing the joy of salvation in Christ Jesus individuals return their unspeakable shouts of praise and adoration to God.

* In fact, we were restored unto the likeness of our Creator by the power of love and by the light of truth that shines from the Giver. It enables us to lift a hand to the needy and to give Christ the honor and glory and

worship; doing so we will never be ashamed; Beloved, God's grace and peace be with you in a manner of the abundant receiving and giving. Amen.