Once there was an old man living out in his farm out in the countryside.*[[1]](#footnote-1)* This old man enjoyed life, the beauty of nature and all of God’s creation especially through animals. In his farm, he had hundreds of animals including sheep, chickens, ducks, cows, pigs, dogs, and horses, just to name a few….but by far, his favorite are his horses. And out of all the horses that he owns, he had his favorite one. He named his favorite horse after his deceased wife Bonnie.

Each morning this old man would take Bonnie out for a ride in the open field green pasture, rain or shine. He enjoyed the great outdoor and experienced God’s blessings each day. Life was all good out in the countryside…living a simple and a care-free life. He couldn’t ask for anything more….or anything less!

Then one morning, as he was ready to go to the barn and take Bonnie out for the usual morning ride, he noticed that Bonnie wasn’t there. Oh NO! Bonnie is gone…she has escaped…..but, but why would she do that? (or maybe someone had came in and stole her). But this was a small village where everybody knew everybody. Who would do such a thing?

So the old man got on another horse and searched all over town searching for his beloved companion. He asked all of his neighbors, hoping that someone might’ve seen Bonnie and can bring her back. He looked and looked all around but he couldn’t find Bonnie and returned empty-handed and depressed. He feared for the worst that he may never see Bonnie again.

Over the next few days, the old man had not only lost his appetite but he didn’t want to go outside of his house at all. Life would never be the same without Bonnie. Many of the neighbors were very concerned about his welfare, so they came over and tried their best to console him. Even though he has lost one of his best companions, the old man thanked his neighbors for their concerns, *“It’s ok, it doesn’t matter, it may not be a bad thing after all. As a matter of fact, I think it can be a good one. All good things must come to an end! Don’t worry, I’ll be alright”* said the old man.

The one night in this middle of his sleep, the old man heard some noise from the outside. Thinking that there might be some intruder trying to steal more horses, he decided to go out and take a look at what was going on. Suddenly he heard this loud horse sound “Ahhhhhhrrrrrr, Ahhhhhrrrrr!” The old man quickly recognized the voice….it was Bonnie! She has returned!!! The old man was ecstatic to see his best friend has returned. Then suddenly he heard another loud horse sound

“Ahhhhhhrrrrrr, Ahhhhhrrrrr!” Wait a minute, there was yet another horse. Apparently Bonnie had brought along a new friend…Wow! Not only did he find the one that he had seemingly lost, he has now gotten a new horse as well. So the old man decided to call him “Clyde”! (Get it? Bonnie and Clyde?!)

The next day, many of the neighbors heard about the old man’s new found fortune that Bonnie has returned and in addition, a new horse has arrived. The old man appreciated their kind words and congratulations by his neighbors and his newfound fortune and blessings. The old man said to his neighbors, *"It is true that I got a new horse for nothing, but it is hard to say whether this is good or bad. It may be an unlucky thing. But we shall see. But I’m thankful that I got Bonnie back."*

As time went on, Clyde would become the favorite horse of the old man’s youngest son who was in his 20’s. Each morning, the son would take Clyde out for a run just like his dad. Life was good once again for the old man and the son, and also with Bonnie and Clyde.

Until one morning, a servant came into the house and was telling the old man that his son has gotten into a terrible accident. He had fallen off from his favorite horse Clyde, for no apparent reason. Nobody knew how that had happened. The son was brought in and had suffered a broken leg and severe head trauma. Thankfully the doctor thought that he will survive. Many of the neighbors once again, came to console this old man. It may take a long long time before his son could walk away under his own power. The old man replied back to the neighbors, *“Don’t worry, nothing serious…perhaps all of this is going to be good. It’s going to be all right. Thanks be to God that my son is alive.”*

A few years later, while the son was still on the road of recovery from the devastated fall that he had suffered, the country had now been involved with a dispute with a neighboring country. Many of the young men under the age of 30 were being recruited to be sent off to war and to fight for the country. Now because of the son’s injury, he was exempted from serving in the military. The war lasted for almost 5 years and many of son’s friends never came home and were killed in the frontline. The entire village was in mourning for their lost sons whom they would never see again.

A few more years had passed, the old man was once again contemplating about the meaning of all that was happening in his life. He sat among many of his close friends, **“*Not all bads are bad and not all goods are good. A loss may turn out to be a gain. Whether it’s good or bad, we must come to accept what God has given to us.*** *Let us give thanks and to give God glory in all that we do.”*

Many of us, I’m sure have had experience similar to the old man in the story, where we question about why things happened the way it did. **How things that are seemingly good may not be good and how things that are seemingly bad may turn out to be a good fortune after all.**

This week I had the opportunity to participate in a gathering among a number of Chinese Presbyterian pastors and elders from various Chinese Presbyterian congregations across the country within our denomination – the Presbyterian Church (USA). Many of them came from east/west/north and south to share and to celebrate what we have in common….our passion for ministry and sharing God’s blessings upon the people whom we have been entrusted with. We shared along different stories of how God has worked and brought us to where we are today. We’ve all traveled different paths but we’re on the same journey….some are more twisted and winding than the others. Some nearly escaped death, in refugee camps and met with various different life challenges, but nevertheless God remained faithfully at work even through all of these struggles and challenges.

During our gathering, one thing that became clear to all of us is that unless you are a true native-American, all of us were immigrants at some point along our faith journey. **By God’s providential care, we all had to surrender part of our past in order to become who we are today.** Some may have left their homeland some 20, 30 or even 50 years ago, some may be 3rd or 4th generations in this country but still being looked upon as “immigrants” or “aliens” and be subjugated to racism and discrimination by others. Regardless of how many years we’ve been in this country or how acculturated or assimilated we are into the American society, we recognized that God’s presence transcends over time and across all spaces. We recognized that God’s hand was upon us even when we come to acknowledge God’s presence in our lives. It’s important to acknowledge **who we are in light of who God is**. **What may seem like a loss became a gain to us. What we may have considered as earthly gain may become a burden or a curse to us.**

Like the Exodus stories that we’ve read in the past couple of weeks, many of these fellow Presbyterian brothers and sisters gave up their entire previous livelihood from their homeland in order to settle into this new “promised” land that God has provided for and placed them in. All of us are on a journey and running a race with our eyes on the heavenly prize in Christ Jesus.

Some have, in the process of assimilation into this new land and new culture, come to be exposed with the knowledge of God’s presence and have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They’ve put aside their cultural past and even faith practice, and fully embraced God’s providential love and were touched by the grace of God. They were willing to open their hearts to fully receive Christ and be used by God.

During the sharing of our various ministries, we’ve come to reflect on God’s guiding hands through all the years, recognizing God’s faithfulness at work in our lives, even when we do not see it with our eyes, or even within our lifetime.

The economy of God has often been associated with who’s in and who’s out. We’ve often place upon our human values and standards in the eyes of God and God’s kingdom here on earth, that is here and is yet to come. As God affirmed God’s covenant to the people through Abraham, *“I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*[[2]](#footnote-2) But this is not a free-ride. It’s not that we said “Yes” to God and we’ll just cruise the rest of the way. God expects all of us to do our parts to honor God with our very best. God expects us to surrender our all even if it means yielding all that we’ve got…because all things ultimately belong to God. As we read from our gospel reading earlier, *the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the Kingdom.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

The Apostle Paul also affirmed his personal faith in spite of his physical trials and conditions of being imprisoned, as he wrote, ***“whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.”****[[4]](#footnote-4)* To Paul, all loss is gain and all gain is loss under the surpassing power of God’s love.

Today on this World Communion Sunday, we celebrate the Feast of Thanksgiving in participation of the Holy Communion with all of our brothers and sister around the world, regardless of what languages that we may speak, what cultures we were raised, what denominations or traditions that we may be comfortable worshipping in. We are all welcomed at this table.

On this day, the universal church celebrates and rededicates our lives and our commitments. We declare that the God we serve is a universal God who reigns supreme over all municipalities, divisions and nations. God’s love transcends and breaks down all barriers that we humanly put up and separated ourselves. Whenever we are gathered around this table, or in the remote countryside in a makeshift tent, we declare that **we are all One in Christ and One in the Spirit among the universal church of Christ**. Thanks be to God, Amen.

**Benediction:**

***Forget what lies behind us and we must strain forward to what lies ahead. We press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.[[5]](#footnote-5)***

**May the God of hope be proclaimed in heaven and on earth and under the earth.**

**May all of our honor and praise be declared in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.**

1. *All Loss May Turn Out to Be a Gain* [*https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/148ae0af123c3d3f*](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/148ae0af123c3d3f) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Genesis 12:3* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Matthew 21:43* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Philippians 3:7-9* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Philippians 3:13-14* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)